

READER



Eve Ewing believes in Chicago's public schools

Her new book *Ghosts in the Schoolyard* explains why people care so much about institutions the world has deemed to be "failing."

By MAYA DUKMASOVA 8

"They want us to feel afraid": Comics from Marina Labarthe del Solar on trans bodies and fear 14

Over the Monster Mash? Find your new graveyard smash in Leor Galil's 13-song Halloween mix 26

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

THE BEST THING ABOUT DIVERSIFYING a newsroom staff is that the range of relevant events, histories, vocabularies, and concerns increases exponentially. There's just so much more *news*!

The worst thing, however, is that the concerns that arise become harder to view from a distance. Unionization efforts, property tax assessment discrepancies, sexual harassment, and antiblack violence feel more pressing when the woman you sit next to has experienced similar, the sales team is tweeting about them, or they come up in an editorial meeting—not as story ideas, but as personal narratives, glimpses into coworkers' lives.

Not that empathy is a bad thing, of course, it's just that sometimes making a genuine effort to comprehend the experiences of others hurts. The memo leaked to the *New York Times* from the Department of Health and Human Services that seeks to define gender as "biological," "objective," and "administrable" just hurts. *Administrable*! The word fills me with rage on a good day. When applied to one's identity, it also terrifies.

There are some—on staff, among friends, and in this great, diverse city—who are not new to the rage or the terror. Trans folk, nonbinary people, intersex persons. While these changes to Title IX would reverse improvements made at the institutional level—would gender-neutral restrooms that have doubled bathroom access for folks with disabilities be reabolished?—and provide a policy cover for the discrimination against trans people that is already rampant, intersex people seem particularly vulnerable. Many already rely on hormone replacement, an ongoing side effect of medically unnecessary surgeries performed in their earliest days. Will the proposed Trump administration changes deny them going forward?

Intersex Awareness Day is October 26, local activist Pidgeon Pagonis of the Intersex Justice Project tells me. Watch for actions around the city. There's a stunning comics feature in this week's issue by Marina Labarthe del Solar on trans bodies that may aid your own genuine efforts to comprehend the experiences of folks whose lives are different from your own. There's also our stunning cover interview with the brilliant Eve Ewing, who asks us to consider school closures from the perspectives of our city's most vulnerable young people. Listening to such stories might hurt, but they will also expand your whole world. —ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE

IN THIS ISSUE

CITY LIFE

- 3 Shop Window** Photographer Jan Jensen's tintypes make an antique technique contemporary.
- 4 Joravsky | Politics** Democrats, remember 2016 and beware!
- 5 Dukmasova | Housing** The Lift the Ban Coalition steps up pressure for a state senate vote on rent control.

FOOD & DRINK

- 12 Restaurant Review** Andy Sisomboune's Lao pop-up Sao Song is a taste of good things to come.

ARTS & CULTURE

- 16 On Culture** University of Chicago

grad students want their union to be recognized.

- 17 Theater** E. Faye Butler is Mama Rose in Porchlight's extraordinary Gypsy.
- 19 Theater** Calling midwestern Asian- and Pacific Islander-American playwrights
- 19 Dance** In the Joffrey's new Swan Lake, there's no lake and no love.
- 20 Theater** Casa Propia, Remy Bumpo's *Frankenstein*, and six more new stage shows, reviewed by our critics
- 21 Podcast** Slate's *Slow Burn* covers rapidly unfolding scandals—at a digestible pace.

- 22 Movies** Director Tamara Jenkins returns with *Private Life*, a sharp and funny examination of infertility and art.
- 24 Movies** Melissa McCarthy and Richard E. Grant make likable scoundrels in *Can You Ever Forgive Me?*
- 24 Movies** Mid90s, *The Price of Everything*, and seven more new releases, reviewed by our critics

MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

- 30 Shows of note** Kweku Collins, Joseph Chillum, Mitski, *Nine Inch Nails*, and more of the week's best

FEATURE

Eve Ewing on schooling vs. education

The writer and organizer's new book explores what can be learned from closing public schools.

BY MAYA DUKMASOVA 8

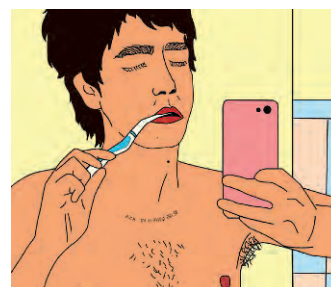


COMICS FEATURE

Sometimes I believe them

Trans bodies, fear, and feeling normal in 2018

BY MARINA LABARTHE DEL SOLAR 12



MUSIC FEATURE

The Reader's Halloween mix

Thirteen (of course!) spooky local tunes to binge on candy to.

BY LEOR GALIL 26

CLASSIFIEDS

- 36 Jobs**
- 36 Apartments & Spaces**
- 36 Marketplace**
- 37 Savage Love** Navigating kitten play and nonconsensual masturbation
- 38 Early Warnings** Noname, Sarah Shook & the Disarmers, Swamp Dogg, and more shows to look for in the weeks to come
- 38 Gossip Wolf** An all-star Chicago crew play *Black Sabbath* and *Abba* for Halloween, the Cultural Center hosts auditions for the bill at Taste of Chicago, and more.



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SHOP WINDOW

Modern tintypes

Photographer Jen Jansen uses her Bucktown studio to restore old photos and revive an antique technique.



REMEMBER THAT BOTCHED restoration of the *Ecce Homo* fresco in a Spanish church a few years ago, which became a meme known as “Potato Jesus”? Photographer Jen Jansen has a copy of it displayed in front of her Bucktown studio, where it serves as a cautionary tale of what the ravages of time—and inexperienced restorers—can do to a picture.

“Potato Jesus” may be funny, but Jansen is very conscious that damaged heirloom family photos are not a laughing matter: “People bring me really old pictures and get a very emotional reaction when they see them restored,” she says. “It’s like they’re keeping a member of their family alive.”

Besides restoring photographs, Jansen makes portraits in tintype, one of the oldest photographic processes. “It’s how I can create the longest-lasting pictures,” she explains. The technique, popular in the 1860s and ’70s, employs an image printed directly onto a thin metal sheet (also known as a wet plate) coated with a special emulsion; since there are

no negatives, each image is unique. To capture them, Jansen prides herself on using a made-in-Chicago Deardorff 11x14 studio camera, a 1920s relic she’s dubbed “the Beast.” “People here seem very interested in the process, but also in the preservation of their own history. Seems like that’s the way of the city,” reckons the 41-year-old transplant from San Diego, who moved here six years ago and opened her storefront last year.

Jansen has been obsessed with photographic processes since her early 20s, when she attended a summer program on black-and-white photography at New York’s International Center of Photography. After that she worked in a number of photography labs, and went on to manage a portraiture and restoration studio, where she decided to commit to analog photography. Now running her own business, Jansen offers tintype portrait sessions (starting at \$200, they’re a popular gift for couples celebrating their ten-year wedding anniversary, also known as the “tin year”),



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JEN JANSEN PHOTOGRAPHY
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as well as photo restorations, photo conversions to tintype, and wet-plate workshops, where she teaches tintype photography while using any kind of analog camera—even a toy. Jansen also photographs events off-site, and has to find a way of building makeshift darkrooms when she does, since tintype photos need to be developed immediately.

This self-taught tinkerer doesn’t seem to shy away from creating anything from scratch; she even makes the varnish she uses to coat her photographs. Her practice may be centered on an antique technique, but she’s not really stuck in the past: “What I’m doing here is trying to create modern images of Chicagoans with this old piece of Chicago history.”

—ISA GIALLORENZO



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READER
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Red state alert

Warning, Dems: a Rauner victory over Pritzker could turn Illinois Republican.

By BEN JORAVSKY



Got a call the other day from an old friend—a Bernie Sanders Democrat—who told me something that hit me like a blow to the belly.

Sorry, he said, but as much as I detest the policies of Governor Rauner—and I detest them very much—I can’t bring myself to vote for J.B. Pritzker, the Democratic nominee.

Instead, he wouldn’t vote for governor at all—he’d leave that portion of the ballot blank. “I’m tired of voting for the lesser of two evils,” he said.

Oh, brother. Democrats, when will you ever learn?

As someone—I can’t remember who—told me just the other day, when it comes to elections, Republicans fall in line and Democrats fall in love. And if the Democrat on the ballot doesn’t meet our lofty standards, well, chances are we won’t vote at all. Even if that means losing the race and giving Rauner the power to turn Illinois red. As I’ll explain in a bit.

Look, I realize Pritzker’s ahead in the polls. But as I recall, Hillary Clinton was also ahead in the polls two years ago.

A lot of Bernie Sanders supporters sat out that race, and Donald Trump wound up narrowly winning Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. And here we are.

My guess is that Rauner’s Pritzker-bashing commercials are having much the same effect on progressive Democrats as those Clinton e-mails leaked to WikiLeaks. It makes it hard to hop on the bandwagon and support the Dem.

OK, progressives, I get it. Pritzker is a far from perfect candidate. For what it’s worth, I didn’t vote for him in the Democratic primary back in March.

He wasn’t even my third choice. I voted for state senator Daniel Biss. Bob Daiber, the downstate Democratic, was my second choice.

But evil? That’s ridiculous. Yes, I know all about how he pulled out those toilets on his Gold Coast mansion to lower his tax bill. I

hear the same Rauner commercials as the rest of you.

But Pritzker’s also signed on to a progressive Democratic agenda on everything from school funding to fair taxes to legalizing marijuana to tolerating unions.

Of course, there’s always a chance that Pritzker won’t follow through if he moves more to the center once in office. But that fight’s in the future. At the moment, our alternative to Pritzker in November’s election isn’t Daiber or Biss.

It’s Bruce Rauner—God help us all.

And there’s way too much at stake to risk electing Rauner over Pritzker by not voting at all.

Let me remind you of what you should already know by now. Rauner is a union-busting corporate buccaneer who clearly wants to do to Illinois what Scott Walker and Mike Pence did to Wisconsin and Indiana—namely, crush unions, privatize education, and gut environmental regulations.

To accomplish these goals, Rauner will try to blackmail Democratic legislators into passing his proposals by keeping the state from passing a budget.

That’s what he did for the first three years of his reign. He only signed on to a budget this year because, obviously, he figured he couldn’t win reelection without one.

If reelected, Rauner would probably go right back to playing budget blackmail, putting social service providers and universities at risk once again.

I’ve written many times about the impact Rauner’s policies have had on unions and schools and universities and taxes and the environment.

If that doesn’t motivate Democrats to vote for Pritzker, consider the next big redistricting fight.

If Rauner wins, he could change Illinois into a red state. It would literally come down to the

luck of the draw.

Right now Illinois’s legislative districts more or less reflect the political demographics of the people who live here. That is, there are more Democrats than Republicans who live here—a Republican candidate for president hasn’t won here since 1988—and so there are more Democrats than Republicans in the statehouse and in Congress.

But this is by no means a permanent state of affairs. And if reelected Rauner could gerrymander the legislative districts in order to maximize the strength of Republican voters. In 2021, after the next census, the legislators will draw new congressional and state legislative maps. Soon thereafter, these newly drawn districts will be sent to the governor for approval. If Pritzker is governor, he’ll approve the maps drawn by the Democratic legislators, and the districts of Illinois will remain Democratic for the most part.

If Rauner’s elected governor, on the other hand, he’ll probably veto the maps the Democrats draw. That would lead to the tiebreaker system that state law mandates.

The name of a Democrat and a Republican would get put into a replica of Abraham Lincoln’s stovepipe hat—as though dragging poor Lincoln into the mix somehow adds credibility to this process. And then the secretary of state would draw a name.

If the Republican name gets drawn, the Republicans draw the state legislative boundaries that will exist until 2030.

You can bet the Republicans will pack Democratic voters into supermajority Democratic districts and spread out Republican voters in order to gain an edge in a majority of districts.

Thus, the Republicans will be the majority party even though they have a minority of support in the state. That’s essentially what’s happened in Washington, where Republicans control the House and the Senate even though more voters voted for Democrats than Repub-

licans in the 2016 congressional elections.

In sum, Illinois may be one of the bluest, most Trump-hating states in the union. But most of its congressmen would be Trump rubber-stampers. And its legislators would ratify Rauner’s far-right agenda.

Not to depress you or anything.

By the way, this luck of the draw has happened twice in the last 27 years.

In 1991, Republican governor Jim Edgar couldn’t agree with Democratic legislators. Then-secretary of state George Ryan wound up pulling the name of Al Jourdan, then the chairman of the state Republican Party. And the Republicans drew the legislative districts.

In 2001, there was another deadlock between Republican governor George Ryan and Democrats. In this instance, the Democrats won the hat drawing—and they drew the political maps that lasted until 2010.

There was no drawing in 2010 because Governor Pat Quinn, a Democrat, approved the map that statehouse Democrats had drawn.

Is this system fair? No. Should it be replaced? Probably (and there is a Fair Map effort in the state). But this is the system that currently exists, and it won’t be changed by the 2021 redistricting.

I suppose the process wasn’t so bad when moderate Republicans—like Edgar and Ryan—were governor.

But we live in a different political universe these days. I’m not sure moderates like Edgar or Ryan could even win a Republican primary anymore.

Anyway, if Rauner gains control of the legislative boundaries, he would have no Democratic legislative majorities to block his agenda. He’d be free to privatize education, eradicate unions, and let businesses pollute our air and waterways to his little heart’s content.

Also, with the Republicans in charge, they’d probably revoke HB 40, the reproductive rights bill. There’s already a Republican-sponsored bill to do just that. It will never pass so long as the Democrats are in charge. But it’s a different ballgame with Republicans running the show.

I understand that it might be hard for many of my fellow progressives to vote for Pritzker.

But the stakes are too high, Democrats, for you to be so selective.

You made this mistake once before. The outcome is President Trump.

Let’s not make the same mistake again.

@BennyJshow

POLITICS

Linking domestic violence to rising rents

The Lift the Ban Coalition steps up the pressure for a state senate vote on rent control.

By MAYA DUKMASOVA

A small crowd of people unfurled a huge, white banner in front of state senate president John Cullerton's district office on Belmont last Thursday morning. "Illinois needs rent control now," the sign proclaimed. Members of the Lift the Ban Coalition, which has been organizing statewide for more than a year to repeal Illinois's Rent Control Preemption Act, were here to drop off hundreds of postcards signed by Chicagoans in support of the initiative. They also wanted to remind the public about a referendum on rent control that would be on the ballots of three wards in the November election.

The 1997 Rent Control Preemption Act—a law that was pushed by the ultraconservative, Koch brothers-funded American Legislative Exchange Council in states across the country beginning in the 1980s and was adopted in Illinois when both houses of the state legislature were under Republican control—is the biggest hurdle standing in the way of rent regulation in Chicago. The law prohibits local governments from establishing any rules about how fast or how high residential or commercial rents can rise.

Lift the Ban first began organizing around a state house bill proposed by representative Will Guzzardi, whose district on the northwest side has seen rapid gentrification in recent years. Guzzardi's bill aims simply to repeal the 1997 ban in order to free local governments to consider measures to regulate rents.

But last spring, a far more sweeping measure was introduced by Mattie Hunter in the senate. Hunter's bill would not only lift the ban, but also establish rent regulation throughout the state and create new tax incentives for smaller landlords to maintain their properties in good repair and keep rents af-

fordable. Hunter's proposal doesn't allow the government to set rent prices, but establishes regional boards to determine median market rents and peg increases to inflation.

The coalition is urging Cullerton to cosponsor Hunter's proposal and to move her bill to a vote in the full senate. They've brought out dozens of people to testify at public hearings Hunter has been holding around the state to gather feedback on her bill. They're also behind the second Chicago referendum on rent control.

During last spring's primary election, 16,000 voters across 77 precincts received ballot questions about rent control—and 75 percent voted in favor. Now, voters in the 35th, 46th, and 49th Wards—spanning parts of Logan Square, Uptown, and Rogers Park, respectively—will see questions about rent control on their November ballots.

As with all ballot initiatives concerning policy—which, per state law, can only be advisory—the question isn't exactly neutral, implying that rent control will be an effective tool to combat eviction and displacement. Voters will be asked: "Should the State of Illinois be able to regulate rents to address rising rents, unjust evictions, and gentrification in our communities?"

But coalition organizer Jawanza Malone says he's confident people will make an informed decision when they respond. "People aren't stupid," said Malone. "I think that it's an insult to say that a question that's asking voters how they feel about an issue is somehow manipulating the voting public when they go into a polling place."



Last week's Lift the Ban Coalition demonstration in front of state senate president John Cullerton's district office on Belmont. MAYA DUKMASOVA

Cullerton was not at the office to respond to the coalition last Thursday. A staffer accepted the group's latest delivery of postcards and added them to a towering stack now containing more than 1,000 signatures. Reached by phone later, Cullerton's spokesman John Patterson said the senate president has yet to make up his mind on Hunter's proposal. "He's got an open mind on this," Patterson said. "There's been impressive turnout and interest, and a lot of people around the state want an opportunity to have their voices heard on this."

Patterson also noted that Cullerton created the senate's special committee on housing and installed Hunter as the chair to collect input on solutions to the affordable housing crisis in the state—including rent control. During the last hearing Hunter held in Chicago, a small cadre of landlords spoke in support of her bill because it would provide tax breaks that don't currently exist for smaller property owners. But there was also a strong turnout by real estate industry representatives claiming the bill would impinge on landlords' property rights while doing nothing to preserve housing affordability.

Around ten o'clock, a red bullhorn appeared, and women began to take turns sharing their personal stories of housing insecurity in front of Cullerton's office. The goal was to underscore how a lack of affordable housing options is a "gender justice issue," according to Susan Armstrong, a coalition organizer with Organizing Neighborhoods for Equality: Northside (ONE Northside).

"The gender pay gap continues to exist in the United States," she said. "Rents are rising

at an increasingly fast pace all over the state, and city women are feeling the strain."

When Caitlin Brady, a member of the Chicago chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America, took the horn, she told a chilling tale of her eight-year abusive relationship with a man downstate—a man who was also her landlord and to whom she said she paid about \$500 a month for rent. It was affordable on her \$11 per hour wage as a certified nursing assistant. Brady said that over the years, she thought of leaving many times, only to be dissuaded by the rising cost of rent; she also knew she'd have a hard time finding a place on her own without an independent rental history.

"One day it got so bad I could no longer ignore what was happening to me," she said, her hands shaking as she read from a piece of paper. "He got so mad one day he choked me on the bathroom floor until I passed out. . . . I came to the realization that I was going to die, that this man would literally kill me if I didn't leave."

Brady said escaping the relationship meant leaving behind most of her possessions, her job, her mother, and coming to Chicago, where she could sleep on her sister's floor while they searched for a place they could afford together.

"I work 40 hours a week, and there is no reason that in the richest country in the history of mankind I couldn't find a safe space to live," Brady said. "No one should have to stay in a horrible situation because it's economically feasible. No one should have to choose between a fist and homelessness."

@mdoukmas

faces of 53rd street

A MONTHLY SERIES
FEATURING HYDE PARK
NOTABLES



THIS MONTH

Lee Padgett



SEE THE COMPLETE FACES OF 53RD VIDEO SERIES AT CHICAGOREADER.COM/53RDFACES

U.S. Navy veteran/chemist turned lingerie entrepreneur, Lee Padgett launched Busted Bra Shop with the desire to fill a simple need – to buy a well-fitting bra in her hometown. She opened in 2013 with just four bra styles, but now stocks hundreds of styles in a rainbow of colors from AA to O cup sizes, and 28" to 56" band sizes in the first Detroit store as well as her new location in Hyde Park.

Lee made the top ten of the 2013 Hatch Detroit business incubator competition, and while she didn't win the \$50,000 prize to kickstart her store, she came away with something else – the word of mouth and support of women who called, emailed, and voted for Busted Bra Shop – and passionately wanted a locally-owned lingerie store in their community. This early market research made Lee confident Busted would have a strong following, and customers began shopping with her even before the first store opened in December.

The shopping experience at Busted is completely different than just buying a bra off the rack in the same size you've always worn. Lee's staff is expertly trained in bra and foundation garment fittings, and customers typically discover they've been wearing the incorrect bra size for years. A properly fitted bra can be transformative, and it's not uncommon for Lee and her staff to see happy tears in the fitting room, from women thrilled with their new look.

The store offers bras for many different body types, with every-day, sport, nursing, mastectomy, plunge, wire-free, and

strapless bras in a range of sizes, and panties stocked in XXS through 10X sizes. Some of the brands Busted carries include Cosabella, Curvy Kate, Elila, Elomi, Fantasie & Freya, Goddess, Hanky Panky, Montelle, Panache, Parfait, and Simone Perele. If you thought bras were limited to plain white, beige, and black, Busted customers love the selection of fun, vibrant colors – everything from chartreuse to magenta, to midnight blue,

lavender, and more. The store also stocks shapewear, leggings, lingerie, hosiery, and loungewear and robes.

"It's all about feeling your best self every day and having some fun with your lingerie, even if no one will see it but you," said Lee. "The right bra can make you stand up straighter and look better in your clothes, and it feels great to have that little bit of extra confidence."

You can't help but start chatting and bond with Lee and her team, and in connecting with her customers, Lee found out that many were coming to shop in Detroit all the way from Chicago – specifically from Hyde Park.

She came to the neighborhood to scout loca-



tions, and immediately knew that the space at 1013 1/2 E. 53rd Street would be perfect for her Hyde Park launch.

The store opened in May of 2018, and Lee even rented an apartment down the street so she could be close to the store and become a part of the community. The Bust-

ed-wrapped company truck was a hit in the local Fourth of July "4th on 53rd" parade, and the store also participated in the recent "South Side I Do" Hyde Park Wedding Stroll.

Lee is happy to organize free private parties at the store – 8-10 people can gather for refreshments, fittings, and personalized service – and she encourages women to round up their friends, neighbors, church groups, bridal parties, and sorority sisters for a special after-hours event at Busted. The store hosts trunk show/fit events with representatives from lingerie brands, fashion shows with customers as models, and holiday-themed events, and also offers gift cards and a registry service.

1013 1/2 E. 53rd Street
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Eve Ewing still believes in Chicago's public schools

The new book *Ghosts in the Schoolyard* explains why people care so much about institutions that the world has deemed “failing.”

By MAYA DUKMASOVA



Before she became a nationally acclaimed poet, comic book writer, and arguably Chicago's biggest Twitter celebrity, Eve Ewing was a graduate student visiting her father in Florida during the spring of 2013. This is where she learned that Chicago would be closing dozens of public schools. “I was alone, sitting on the edge of the bed with the door closed, my grip tightening on the glowing rectangle of my phone,” she recalls in her new book, *Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago's South Side*. She scrolled through the list of schools. “When I got to the school in Bronzeville where I'd been a teacher, I had to read and reread it and read it again to be sure I wasn't missing something. Surely this was a mistake?”

Between 2008 and 2011, Ewing had taught science at Pershing West Middle School. Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Public Schools officials claimed it was necessary to close Pershing and 48 other schools because of underenrollment and students' poor performance on standardized tests. After the announcements came protests from teachers, parents, and students. This all made Ewing wonder: “Why do people care so much about schools that the world has deemed to be ‘failing’?” For the next few years of her life, she tried to figure it out by observing the effect school closures had on the Bronzeville community.

Ghosts grew out of Ewing's doctoral dissertation at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, but it's written in de-

liberately accessible language. It demonstrates the history of the racism that shaped CPS policy for decades and continues today. It also chronicles what she calls “institutional mourning,” a kind of collective existential crisis prompted by the destruction of public institutions in Bronzeville. She finds that school closures are a form of publicly sanctioned violence that not only derails black children’s futures but also erases a community’s past. “I hope I can keep black history from going away,” she writes. “I hope to help us understand, and remember.”

I recently sat down with Ewing over too-complicated cocktails and bowls of papardelle pasta to discuss the book, the latest round of CPS school closures, and how people can fight back.

Who do you hope will read this book?

I envision a number of audiences. One is graduate students and other faculty members for sure. There’s this idea of institutional mourning, which is a theoretical idea that I hope colleagues in my field will take up and be interested in. I wanted to make a really clear case for how people should understand what structural racism is—when we say something’s racist or something is not racist, what that actually means.

I want teachers and policy makers and parents and community members and even high school or middle school students to be able to read the book. When we think about history, a lot of people think of [it] as something that happened somewhere else. History happened somewhere else a long time ago. Part of what sparked this whole project was the ahistorical way that people were talking about school closures. That’s a broader issue with so many topics, whether it’s Confederate monuments or ICE—people talk about these things in a way that is stripped of any historical context. That happened in 2013 with the school closures in a way that was infuriating for me.

I want people in Chicago and students and teachers to have a chance to reckon with the fact that CPS is a historical entity that exists in a historical context that was made and constructed by human people. I remember a CPS student interviewed me for a school project when I was still writing this dissertation, and she said, “It never occurred to me that CPS had a history.”

It’s such an enactment of power to convince people that they are existing in a history-less vacuum. Because every decision that you make and every question that you face then becomes a matter of this false immediacy that doesn’t ever force you to reckon with the wrongs that people have committed or the lessons that you could learn.

It’s like the revolving door of faces and names that run CPS are always able to have some sort of plausible deniability for their decisions: “This is now, and that was then, and that’s it.” You observe in the book: “The only history that matters is last year’s test scores.” And when city officials imply that, it’s hard to figure out how to respond, because that’s the only sense of history they have: whoever is in charge was put in charge literally last year or even last week. How do we grapple with this revolving door of actors who make this history?

Actually, it’s a form of gaslighting. It has so much resonance with what’s happening at the federal level. It also has resonance with the everyday lived experiences of people of color, of women, of queer people, which is that people can just say things to your face and you’re kind of looking around for the camera. Like, is this really happening to me? Is somebody really saying this to me? And in the moment you can kind of freeze up.

They were talking about the police academy on WBEZ. It was when there were a lot of people doing protests at City Hall. And ‘BEZ did like a quick 30-second summary of it. I love ‘BEZ and I love their reporting, but what I heard on the radio was so discordant from what I had witnessed myself being there the previous day. They played a short clip of Rahm saying: We need this police academy because there’s been these years of disinvestment on the west side and it’s time that somebody finally invests. And that’s why we need to spend these \$95 million. I yelled. I was like, *Ahh!* It was such a masterful, Karl Rove flip of the script. He took the script of investment/disinvestment, west side, putting money in the community, and flipped it to talk about building a police training academy. It’s that kind of thing that makes you look around like . . . am I loony? It’s that kind of moment of cognitive dissonance that sparked the whole book.

GHOSTS IN THE SCHOOLYARD: RACISM AND SCHOOL CLOSINGS ON CHICAGO’S SOUTH SIDE

By Eve L. Ewing (University of Chicago Press). In conversation with Brandis Friedman, Sun 10/28, 1:30 PM, Ryan Center, 70 Arts Circle Dr., Evanston, sold out, waitlist available.

In conversation with Nikole Hannah-Jones, Michelle Duster, and Natalie Moore, Fri 11/2, 8:30 PM, Harold Washington Cultural Center, 4701 S. Martin Luther King. 312-605-8444, chicagohumanities.org, \$20, \$10 students and teachers.

Do you think about the possibility of Rahm reading this book?

I had not thought about it one way or the other. I don’t care. I believe that most people who work in CPS are good people who actually love children and want to do good. When you’re working within a large bureaucratic system that largely sets terms beyond your control you end up participating in a lot of things that maybe, if you stepped outside of yourself, you might not agree with or you might regret.

I think that there are some people for whom, perhaps, reading a book like this might change their perspective on some things. They may or may not be in a position to implement any of those different perspectives. Rahm—I don’t know him personally. I’ve been in the same space as him, I’ve never spoken to him. I do not get the sense from his public actions that he is necessarily a person who is open to the kind of reflective practice, to say, “Wow, I read this book and it made me realize that maybe some of the things I did were wrong.”

I suspect that in order to become a politician, at a certain level you have to turn off the part of you that is a critically thinking, educated, conscientious person who’s open to learning new things and changing your mind about stuff.

The book analyzes public records of school closure hearings and takes them seriously, like, Hey, people are saying something real. These are not just two-minute recitations from people who are taking things too personally.

I sat and spent hours listening to these recordings just crying. It was actually one of the more traumatic research experiences I’ve ever had. I had to spend hours listening to kids weeping on tape. It was horrible.

The whole structure of the two-minute hearing is a construction that is handed to us. We are told, “This is the way that you get to participate.” Another point that I’m trying to make in the book is that the city overall is profoundly undemocratic, and that we live in a kind of autocracy that manifests in all these different ways. So we’re told by somebody that the way you get to participate in the governance of your school system is that you get two minutes to talk. You have to come to this meeting at this time, and you get your two minutes, and [if you go over] you will be removed BY SECURITY! People were removed by security when their two minutes was up. Old people, kids, people that were crying. And says who? Who says that it has to be that way? Everything about these hearings is interesting to me. It’s a highly performative setting that is also bizarrely like a trial for some reason.

I’m a person who has spent a lot of my life in institutional settings that feel extremely foreign to me. I spend a lot of time professionally and personally trying to understand what people are really saying or what they’re really doing. Rarely are people doing what they say they’re doing.

Do you think this latest round of school closures in February 2018 is any different than the previous one you write about in the book? Do you feel like anything has changed?

On a large scale, no. On a small scale there are some changes that I think are notable.

In the [more recent] round of school closings there are three categories [of schools]: There’s National Teachers Academy, there’s a set of Englewood schools, and then there’s the Jenner-Ogden merger.

The Jenner-Ogden merger is really interesting because no one even calls it a ➔

1 In February 2018 the Chicago Public Schools board approved the closure of four high schools in Englewood with dwindling enrollments as well as the National Teachers’ Academy, a high-performing elementary school in the South Loop serving largely minority students; NTA would be converted into a high school. It also approved the merger of Jenner Academy for the Arts in the Cabrini-Green area with Ogden International School of Chicago in West Town. There was much public outcry about the Englewood school closures and even more about NTA: students and parents argued that the conversion of their school into a high school was being done at the behest of white South Loop parents who didn’t want to send their children to Wendell Phillips Academy High School, a predominantly black school in Bronzeville. E-mails obtained by *South Side Weekly* showed South Loop parents had been lobbying the city for a new high school in the neighborhood for several years. Many Chinatown and Bridgeport residents also supported the conversion of NTA into a high school after years of having to send their kids to overcrowded high schools far away. NTA parents have now filed a lawsuit to halt the plan, alleging that CPS used discriminatory criteria to justify closing the school.

continued from 9

school closing. People call it a merger. On paper what is happening with Jenner and Ogden is exactly the same as what happened in 2013. The schools are going to merge, they're going to have one name and the students are going to be united together. That's essentially what was happening in the majority of the school closings in 2013. The reason that it doesn't cognitively register with people as a closure is because it was a community-driven process.

These two principals had a lot of engagement with parents over a long period of time. And because of that [the process] wasn't a devastating, horrible experience. That's why people don't even call that a school closure. This is so instructive. When I interview people most of what they complain about is feeling disrespected and excluded from any semblance of a process where they had any real voice or mechanism for participation.

What's incredible with the Jenner-Ogden merger is that the city isn't pointing at it and saying, "See, look, we are doing a great job."

It's because that is not a precedent they would want to see replicated. The precedent set there includes a lot of participation from some really good, well-meaning parents. Many of them also happen to be middle-class white people. And I do not believe that city leaders are giving that level of ownership and participation to people of color. That is not a precedent that they want to see replicated across the district. It's dangerous and it's scary to them.

What about the Englewood schools?

I feel like CPS made an attempt [to have] what they called a "community process." Now, *South Side Weekly* and lots of other folks did really good reporting to illustrate the ways in which it was arguably not a community-driven process. But the initial plan of leaving the students out of luck without a school for a year—that got changed. The initial plan was so brazen—in a city where black people were already fleeing because it's functionally uninhabitable for so many, [CPS] knew there was no possible way that all those kids would come back [to the neighborhood]. And so I think that the reaction to that outcry [in the form of public protests] signals some kind of marginal difference.

And then with National Teachers Academy [NTA] . . . man. Even I'm surprised. It is sur-

I wish that we judged the success or failure of our school district by our ability to provide adequately for the most vulnerable children.

-Eve Ewing

prising to me even with my cold, dead, cynical heart. [CPS's] tactics of stalling, of evasion, of misleading—that they use those things on middle-class white parents at a school that was academically successful. Or I should say a diverse cadre of parents, including middle-class white parents. Man, [NTA parents] got played the same way as all these other schools have gotten played.

I do this Chicago Poetry Block Party—this year it was in Austin—and it's like an outdoor poetry festival that I co-organize. I was painting a kid's face and a white woman came up to me and she was like, "I just want to say thank you for your work and thank you for fighting for my kid's school. My kid goes to NTA and I appreciate you fighting for my kid's school." And I was like "Thank you," and tried to say some nice things in response. And she said: "You know, in 2013 I just didn't understand. I just didn't understand, and I didn't

pay enough attention, and I didn't understand how they lie. And I didn't understand until it was my school, until they were saying those things that were not true about my school, and they were lying about my school."

I remember during the last mayoral election interviewing young people organizing for Chuy Garcia in Chinatown who were telling me about going to Thomas Kelly High School in Brighton Park, where there were around 45 kids to a classroom. The NTA closure was presented as a project undertaken on behalf of Bridgeport and Chinatown high-schoolers, so wasn't there some support from people in those communities for NTA's conversion to a high school?

I think that the very, very real need of a high school for Chinatown is something that was apparently never an issue that was of interest to anybody until it conveniently overlapped and converged with [white South Loopers' interests]. And I think that that very real fight has been co-opted as a convenient justification for other parents and other purposes, namely—and I say this because I've gone to these meetings and seen them say this—a handful of white parents in the South Loop whose kids are zoned for [Wendell Phillips Academy High School, a predominantly black school in Bronzeville] and they don't want their kids to go to Phillips. And the closest high school in the South Loop is Jones [College Prep], [but] the selective enrollment is crazy and they're not sure that their kids are going to get into Jones. And that's it.

[NTA] is a beautiful building, and they wanted it, and they got it. The soapbox that I'm on all the time is that every kid in Chicago deserves a high-quality school regardless of where they live, regardless of whether they are in foster care, regardless of whether their parents are dealing with a substance abuse problem, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Every kid deserves a great school. I wish that we judged the success or failure of our school district by our ability to provide adequately for the most vulnerable children. Until we do that I think we're just going to keep patting ourselves on the back for the highs without paying adequate attention to the lows. I believe that there is enough for everybody. Until we make the commitment to provide what every child needs, anything less than that is morally unacceptable to me.

In the book, you didn't delve very deeply into the problems with the way that school funding works, particularly the state's per-pupil funding formula. Did you just want to avoid going down that rabbit hole?

I don't want to say that it's not relevant, because it is. But per-pupil funding doesn't make anybody set a two-minute timer for somebody's grandma to speak at a meeting. Again, I think the problem that so many people articulated is a problem of feeling disenfranchised. It's almost not about the closure. The closure is a manifestation of a broader pattern. The deep mistrust in people's responses to the closure is a manifestation of a longer-term history of malfeasance.

The other thing is, the funding formula can change. There's [been] active debate going on in the last year about how our schools should be funded. I wanted the book to have a little bit more longevity and versatility than that particular fight. I don't think a lot of the things that one might advocate for after reading this book actually cost money.

Third, there's so much wealth in this city. I just have a hard time taking it seriously whenever people are talking about scarcity and what we don't have money for. We have money to pay Aramark to not clean the buildings³. Where'd that money come from?

One of the things you articulate is the way that people engage with public space in Bronzeville. The black community there is attached to parks, schools, and public housing, and has a sense of ownership over those places that has nothing to do with private property ownership.

Right, because we don't have it [*hearty laugh*]. It's like, what do you do when you don't have a house in the suburbs with the backyard? You sit in the park.

There's often outrage when people who don't own property show that they care as deeply for it as if they owned it—like public housing, or a park. In public discourse, there's a history of reading that as overreliance on public goods, or entitlement to property that isn't "theirs." This discourse tends to come from well-to-do white people. Do you think it's just impossible for them to understand attachment to place that's not based on property ownership?

² Ewing was outspoken about her opposition to the decision to close NTA on Twitter and in public appearances.

³ In March the *Sun-Times* reported that of 125 schools inspected by the CPS facilities department and Aramark, a private company that had been managing custodians and food service since 2014, only 34 were found sufficiently sanitary; many others had filthy bathrooms and food-preparation equipment and were infested by rats and other pests. During the 2016-17 school year, CPS paid Aramark \$152 million and another private custodial company, SodexoMAGIC, \$28.5 million. Leslie Fowler, the head of the facilities department, later resigned.

When I talk about that in the book that's not uniquely my observation. In terms of black people and the attachment to public space and public institutions—I'm citing political scientists and psychologists who talk about this sense of collectivity and fictive kinship and togetherness that African-Americans use to move through the world. Some of which I think is forced upon us by necessity and some of which I think is actually common across a lot of cultures around the world. It's one of the ways in which normative American whiteness is actually aberrant. White Western culture fetishizes property. That is fair to say. From the time of Adam Smith to the 21st century, when somebody trespassing on your property is considered grounds for murder without repercussions.

I also think that that's coupled with a broader American hyperindividualism. In a way that's what NIMBYism is. I mean, that's why the backyard itself is a metaphor for one's own property, one's own sense of ownership and space. And there's so much evil bound up in that. It's about capitalism, it's about settler colonialism. Because in an American context all of that enclosure and obsession with private space—the cost of that is indigenous genocide, actually. Property, as a concept in the American imagination, includes black people, our bodies. It absolves people of a sense of responsibility for caring for one another. It absolves people of a sense of a broader public or a polity of which they are a part.

That same fundamental impulse, to preserve and protect one's own property with a total disregard for the well-being of other people, has to do with how you think the CTA should run. How you think the schools should look. How you think the park should look. Who you think should get housing. Etc, etc, etc.

I think that that attachment to place and institutions that I write about is by and large a very beautiful thing. I think it's a really amazing and special way to live your life. But it also leaves you vulnerable in a society that is obsessed with personal property. It leaves you vulnerable to having nothing.

Do you have any battle tactics people can use to push back against further school closings?

I'm a person that has very limited investment in electoral politics, but I think that we have to make people accountable with our votes. This is a city where an election was lost because the snow wasn't plowed. It's reasonable for us to try to rouse each other to make our public officials accountable for the kind of schools that we want to see.



NOLIS ANDERSON

Absurd as they are, one of the reasons I love the aldergoons is because to me the aldermanic position is like the perfect democratic position. Because it's close enough to regular people. A fairly regular person can run for that office and potentially win. These are the people you can go to and be like, "I need a trash can," and they'll be like, "Got it." But at the same time they have enough power to actually make legislation in the third-largest metropolis in the United States. That to me is perfect. Close enough to people, but powerful enough to make real change.

I wish that we had that for our schools. I really wish we had an elected school board. I feel like this is an area where we have to weaponize the vote. We need to elect a mayor who's gonna be accountable when it comes to education. We need to enhance our ability to not only rely on this one person by pushing for an elected, representative school board—which is also something we can influence through the vote.

Every single mayoral candidate should be on the record saying what they feel on this. Every single mayoral candidate should have to justify why they continue to deny Chicagoans the rights that their citizenship endows them with to elect the people that run their schools. Period. So yeah, I feel like we gotta vote.

Because of the segregation in the city, and because so many white parents don't have kids in CPS, there are many people in this city—huge portions of the electorate—that are basically able to opt out of caring about what happens to CPS. I think that everybody in the city needs to see it as their moral and civic and political responsibility to care what happens to our schools. The same way that I vote for the person who runs the water reclamation district I should be able to vote for the person who runs the school district.

Can you imagine a sea change in national education policy coming anytime soon?

The tricky thing about American education is that it's highly localized. At a national level we can see trends, we can see policies that absolutely are broadly enforced and visible across the country. But I think that most change in school policy has to be local, whether you define local as your school district or your state. Because ultimately what happens is that, for better or for worse, school districts learn from each other, and the federal government learns from school districts. A lot of policy that we saw in the last two presidential administrations—the national school policy—came from Chicago.

I think that our obsession with quantification and our obsession with test scores is going to be a much tougher nut to crack. At the same time I think it's important to remember that not everybody has to live or die by those numbers. Those numbers become important when it's time to incentivize or punish districts serving poor children [who rely heavily on federal funding]. In wealthier districts, in majority-white districts, a lot of these tests are just a thing that you do. They're not the be-all, end-all. It's just like something you have to do once a year and you get it over with. They only become magnified in importance when they're being used to punish or control or sanction certain people. Having less of a reliance on tests is important. But it's hard to fight that fight without at the same time looking more deeply at why we have this impulse to so heavily rely on the tests.

The funny thing about all my work is that for some reason I still really believe in public schools. I mean, I think it's very important to not conflate schooling and education. Schooling is a series of institutional practices that take place in a school, some of which have to do with learning, some of which have to do with social acculturation, some of which have to do with punishment and control. Education is the infinitely unknowable, beautiful thing that human beings have been doing on their own and with each other since the beginning of time.

Some education happens in school and some education happens outside of school. Some of what happens in school is educational and some of it is not. Education is beautiful and fundamental. Schooling, in many ways, for pretty much the entirety of American history, has been really nefarious, unkind, and counterproductive. Especially to people of color. We have virtually no historical precedent for what it means to enact the kind of public school system that I think we really need, but for some reason I still believe in it. For now. Get back to me in, like, ten years. 

Chef Andy
Sisomboune at
Ludlow Liquors
NICK MURWAY



RESTAURANT REVIEW

Sao Song minds Chicago's gap in Lao food

Andy Sisomboune's pop-up series is a taste of good things to come.

By MIKE SULA

For Andy Sisomboune, *khao piak sen* is good for the soul. As a boy growing up in Elgin in the 90s and aughts, when he and his sisters took sick, his father made the Lao chicken soup infused with makrut lime leaf and galangal, finished with salt, sugar, and fish sauce, and thick with chewy rice-flour and tapioca-starch noodles. “I would just wake up in the morning from the aroma and run to the kitchen,” he says. “For lots of Lao people it’s their number one comfort dish. That was the one dish I wanted to base everything I did on because it’s so nostalgic.”

Sisomboune is a 29-year-old sous chef at Nico Osteria on the Gold Coast, but his plan is to open Chicago’s first-ever skater bar/Lao restaurant and serve the food he ate growing up.

That includes *khao piak sen*, which sold out within four hours last Tuesday at Ludlow Liquors during the third installment of his pop-up series Sao Song (the Lao words for “22”—the age he started cooking). The fried chicken wings with “tasty paste”—Sisomboune’s name for *jeow bong*, a thick, intensely fragrant pestle-pounded dip of chile, galangal, and lime leaf—were 86’d too, as well as the tofu laab and the sticky, sweet pork-stuffed tapioca dumplings *sakoo yat sai*.

There hasn’t been a dedicated Lao restaurant in Chicago since Edgewater’s Sabai Dee closed eight years ago. Before that there was nothing—though if you’re a fan of any of the city’s restaurants offering dishes from Thailand’s northeastern Isan region, you can get some idea of what it’s like given the influence of the majority ethnic Lao living there—more than in Laos itself.

Such as it is, the suburbs are where it’s at: in Burbank at Spicy Thai Lao, or in Elgin, home to the restaurant White Pearl and a handful of Lao groceries. Most of the state’s Lao settled in Rockford and the aforementioned far-western suburbs in the aftermath of the Vietnam war. That’s where Sisomboune’s mother landed, and separately, his father, after a year in a Thai refugee camp and then college in France. They split up when he was just a toddler, and though his dad held down multiple jobs, he still managed to cook for the kids—and then some. Sisomboune fondly recalls Lao-style omelets, scrambled with fish and soy sauces, garlic, shallot, and tomato; *tum mak tang*, a spicy pounded cucumber analogue to papaya salad; and the *sakoo yat sai* his father brought home from the grocery. (His sister called them “gooey gooey golf balls,” a name that appeared on last week’s menu.) Everything—even



FOOD & DRINK

snacks—was eaten with sticky rice.

“My dad liked to have parties at the house,” he says. “So there was a lot of food around, and a lot of friends and family and gambling.” Special parties invariably meant a number of live ducks were procured and butchered; the textural contrast of the meat, offal, and congealed blood, with chiles, herbs, aromatic toasted rice powder, and fish sauce came together in a laab, a vegan version of which Sisomboune approximated at Ludlow using slices of Phoenix Bean smoked five-spice tofu, diced fried tofu, mashed firm tofu, and Maggi seasoning in place of fish sauce.

Sisomboune's father tried to teach him to cook, but all he ever wanted to do was skate, and after high school he moved to San Francisco, dreaming of going pro. In the meantime he found work as a runner at the modern-Moroccan Aziza, which had recently won a Michelin star. Sisomboune says chef Mourad Lahlou hated him—“probably because I was just a young skater kid who didn't know the ways of a militant kitchen. He would just light me up all day.” But while Lalou's star was rising and he frequently left town, Sisomboune, mesmerized, spent more and more time in the kitchen, expediting and lending a hand when he could. “I would just watch the cooks and fell in love with it. I was just like, ‘I could do that.’”

Homesick, and increasingly unable to afford to live in the Bay Area, he returned home determined to cook professionally, thinking one day he'd apply Aziza's fine-dining approach to Lao food.

It was rough finding work at first. Unlike the situation in today's oversaturated restaurant scene, in 2008 it was hard for an inexperienced cook to find work in a Chicago kitchen. But though his father had since passed away, Sisomboune's sister still lived in Elgin, and he started going to parties again, this time watching and lending a hand with the food. His mother had moved back from Florida, and he'd cook with her too.

He was still skating, though, which eventually led to a lead on a job. John Manion, a friend of Uprise Skateshop owner Uriah Ruta's, was preparing to open La Sirena Clandestina, and though the chef didn't have any positions available, he invited Sisomboune to stage there. After he'd helped prep two days before opening and worked the line during the second soft opening, Manion offered him a full-time job on the line. He stayed there for three years before moving on, with his boss's encouragement, to a succession of esteemed kitchens, among them Juno and the late Bom Bolla.



Khao piak sen, Lao chicken noodle soup
NICK MURWAY



Jeun gai (Lao fried chicken wings) and sakoo yat sai (pork-stuffed tapioca dumplings, aka "goeey goeey golf balls")
NICK MURWAY

It was after Sisomboune had broken up with a long-term girlfriend that Manion encouraged him to start pursuing his dream. “Opening a brick-and-mortar space is very difficult right now, and I didn't have the money to do it,” Sisomboune says. Manion told him, “the best thing you can do is start doing pop-ups. Get your name out and make a brand, and when you're ready to settle down you're not starting from nothing. You'll have a following.”

He launched Sao Song on August 22 at Spilt Milk with a menu of somewhat cheffy takes on humble Lao dishes such as jeow bong (minus the traditional water buffalo skin), tum mak tang, and mak meuah—charred eggplant dip served with market vegetables—as well as the northern Thai pork sausage *sai oua* and

a take on the steamed fish custard *mok pa* that featured a whole grilled fish wrapped in a banana leaf.

Sisomboune followed that up in September at La Sirena, this time joined by longtime friend and barman about town Ben Fasman (Off Color Brewing, Sportsman's Club, Estereo, Dove's Luncheonette), who developed a cocktail menu with flavor profiles that echoed the food.

For the Ludlow Liquors pop-up Fasman says he went for clean and refreshing drinks using the same ingredients as those on the menu, like a rum highball with Topo Chico, lemon-grass syrup, makrut lime, and mint. “But for spicy noodles I wanted drinks you didn't really have to think about,” says Fasman. That meant beer, notably the jasmine-rice-based Beerlao,

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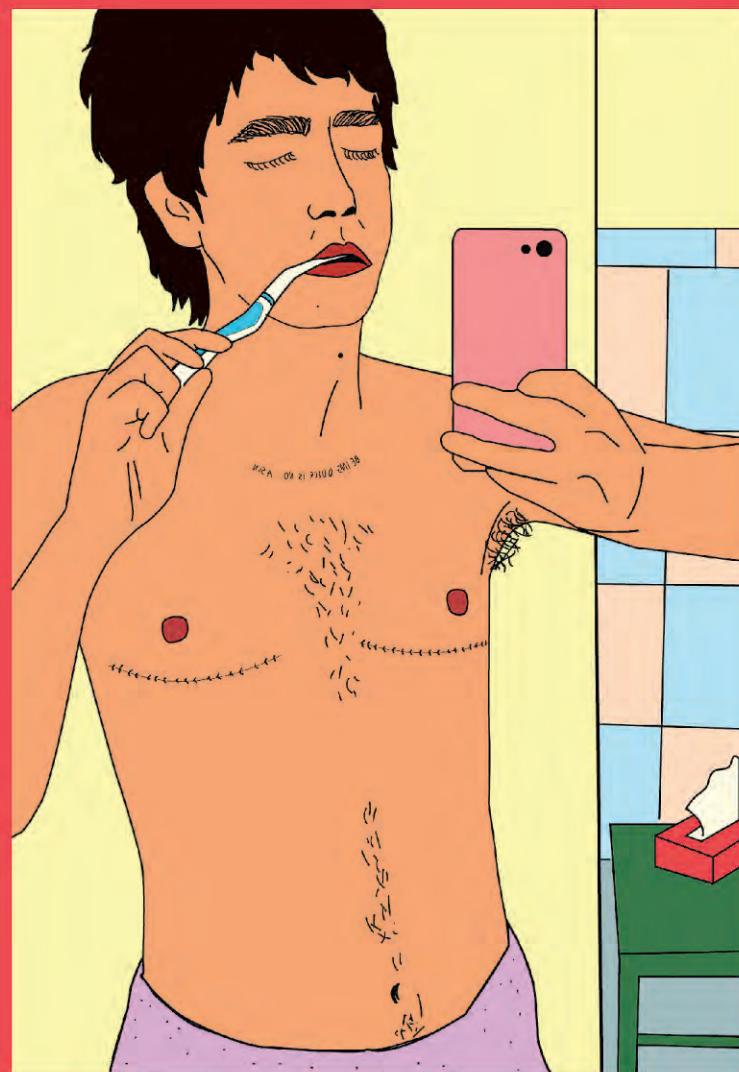
served in a take on michelada or with a pineapple-ginger daiquiri shot.

The growing appeal of the Sao Song pop-ups is measurable by the increasing number of comments and likes on its Instagram page, @saosong22, which was recently given a boost by @laofoodmovement, D.C. chef Seng Luan-grath's account documenting the ascendance of modern Lao dining across the country at restaurants such as her own Thip Khao and San Francisco's Hawker Fare, along with dozens of lower-profile operations across the U.S. and Canada. Sisomboune says he didn't know many Lao-Americans until they started showing up at the pop-ups.

It may not be long before they—as well as the chef's skater friends—have a more permanent place to hang out and eat the food of their youth. This summer he and Fasman were close to making a deal on a brick-and-mortar spot to settle into, but it fell through.

There are more pop-ups coming, though. On November 18 there will be another late-night noodle throwdown, this one at Dove's, featuring some of the same dishes he rolled out at Ludlow, and some newer ones like the pork noodle soup *khao soi*, and beef jerky (*sien hang*) with skewered chicken hearts and charred tomato dip (*jeow marg len*). In the meantime he and Fasman are keeping their eyes open for something permanent. “I want it to be a bar that sells food, and I want it to be a skater bar,” says Sisomboune. “Every major city has one. New York has Max Fish, LA has the Cha Cha Lounge, San Francisco has Delirium. My whole vision is having a place that represents exactly who I am: a skateboarder who grew up with parents from Laos.”

@MikeSula



THE FIRST TIME I INJECTED HORMONES I FELT AN ENORMOUS RUSH. ONE STEP CLOSER TO ME.

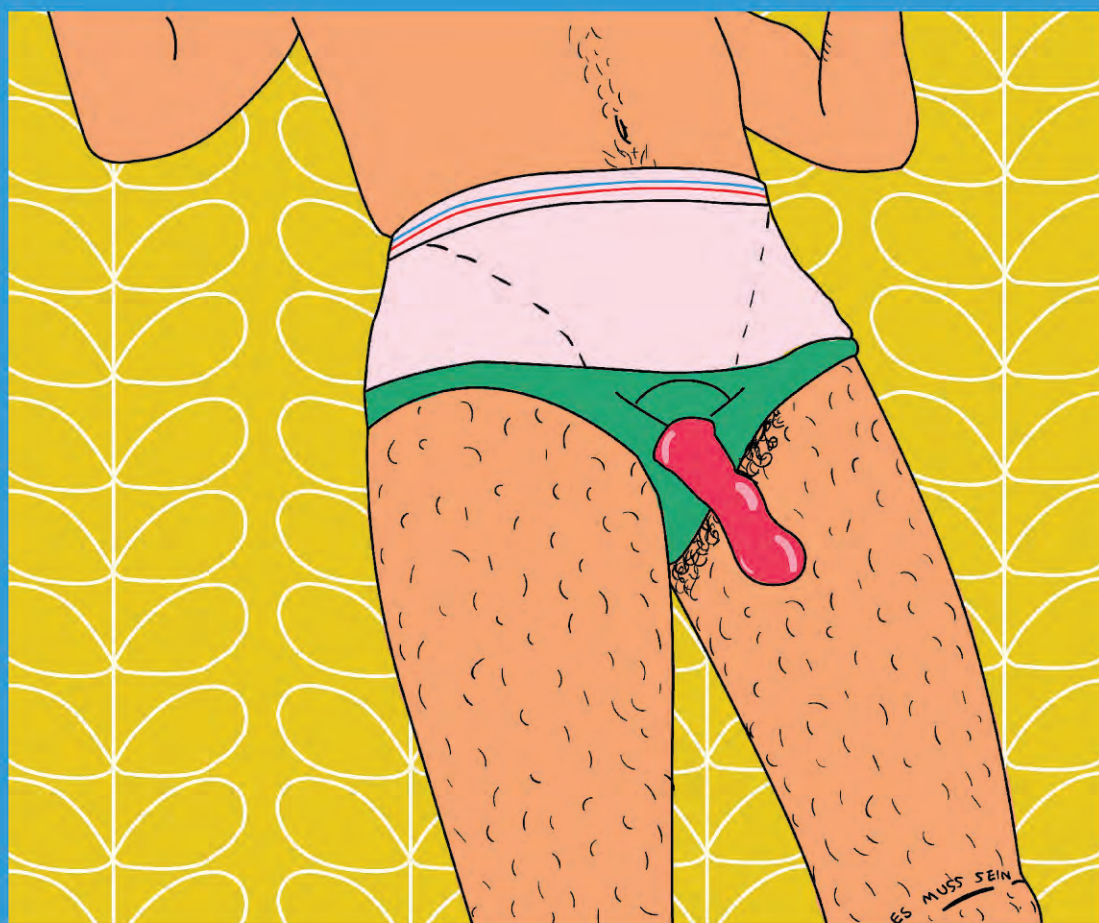
AFTER TOP SURGERY I WRAPPED A TOWEL AROUND MY WAIST. I WATCHED IT FALL, RISE, FALL, RISE.

AM I NORMAL? AM I A MONSTER? SOMETIMES I BELIEVE THEM. I DON'T WANT TO.

THEY WANT US TO
FEEL AFRAID. ISOLATED.
UNSAFE.

NOT HUMAN.

THEY'RE GOOD AT
IT.



WE NEED TO SHOUT.
THIS IS ME.
THIS, IS MY TRANS
BODY.
THIS IS MY
NORMAL,
HUMAN,
BODY.

- MARINA



Graduate Students Union co-president Claudio Gonzáles and pro-union demonstrators outside U. of C.'s Neubauer Collegium Deanna Isaacs

ON CULTURE

You can't scare them, they're sticking with the union

The University of Chicago grad student union demands recognition, even without government certification.

By DEANNA ISAACS

Is teaching work? Not if the teacher's a student at the University of Chicago.

The U. of C. maintains that graduate student teaching (and research) is a purely educational experience, carried out for the benefit of the person doing it.

Never mind that no modern American industry has been better at exploiting labor than its virtuously nonprofit universities, with their armies of underpaid adjuncts and powerless graduate students.

One year ago, U. of C. graduate students—those famously bookish library and lab rats—decided to do something about that.

They voted, by a margin of more than two-to-one (among the 1,582 casting ballots), to unionize. Specific issues they wanted to address included pay schedules and rates (espe-

cially in the face of rising rents in Hyde Park), health care, and protection for grad students experiencing discrimination and harassment; above all, they wanted to have a role in determining their own working conditions.

The resulting union, Graduate Students United, affiliated with the American and Illinois Federations of Teachers and the American Association of University Professors, applied for certification with the National Labor Relations Board.

If certification had been granted, the university would have had to recognize the union and negotiate a contract with it. Under the Obama administration, the NLRB gave graduate student workers the green light on unionization, and at numerous other universities, grad student unions had been established.

But Donald Trump had begun filling seats on the NLRB, and this year—before the U. of C. certification had been ruled on—the politics of the board took a harder tilt to the right. As Dan Montgomery, president of the Illinois Federation of Teachers, told me, allowing a Trump-dominated NLRB to rule on the U. of C. application would have been a treacherous gamble.

“They could have used the Chicago petition to rule against graduate employees everywhere,” Montgomery says. “They could have decided that the previous labor board erred, these people are not employees, they can’t have a union.”

However: “Without a case before them, they can’t make that ruling. And rather than give them that legal opportunity, UChicago grads pulled their petition.”

But they didn’t give up on the union. Since then, they’ve been trying to get the university to recognize and meet with them, even though it’s not required by law. The administration has repeatedly refused, most recently in response to a request sent by the union October 5.

Last Thursday morning—despite an e-mailed warning from dean John W. Boyer that a protest “would have the effect of disrupting the learning of undergraduate students”—hundreds of union members walked out of their classrooms and laboratories to gather in front of the university’s administration building, flex their group muscle, and demand recognition.

Waving BARGAIN NOW signs and chanting “[U. of C. president Robert] Zimmer, Zimmer, you’re no good / Recognize us like you should!,” they cheered a series of rousing speakers emceed by graduate students Natalia Piland and Pascal Brixel.

Montgomery was first up: “I don’t give a good goddamn what Robert Zimmer says,” he told them. “You are a union!” He was followed by undergraduate Sam Joyce, who declared that undergrads are “proud to stand with grad workers because we know that their working conditions are our learning conditions.” He added, “I didn’t come here because I want a fancy, shiny new dorm or a new conference center or a new luxury hotel. I came here because I want a good education, and I want the people providing that education . . . to have a

decent life while they’re teaching here.”

Ben Laurence, a lecturer in the philosophy department and a member of the U. of C.’s non-tenure-track faculty union, Faculty Forward, said it took three years of negotiating to get a three-year contract at the U. of C., but told the members of the grad student union that “it can be done, even here.” And Karen Rice, a self-described “grad worker” at Georgetown University, told the crowd how the grad student union there overcame opposition and got the administration to agree to bypass the NLRB and negotiate with them.

The final speaker was GSU copresident Claudio Gonzáles, who in an impassioned speech made the most salient point of the day: he said he loved Dean Boyer’s warning letter because the administration “finally had to admit how critical our labor is to making this place go.”

After that, the students and their supporters piled into the street, walking the few blocks to the Neubauer Collegium, where Piland said Zimmer would hear them (they’d heard he was there, though he didn’t make an appearance), and renewed their chants. They finished with a final shout of “We’ll be back” before scattering like so many leaves into the bright October afternoon.

In a statement issued after the demonstration, the university said, “[T]here is no union with legal status as the certified representative of any graduate teaching or research assistants at the University.”

It continued: “We continue to work directly with graduate students on a variety of collaborative efforts across the University, including the Committee on Graduate Education and UChicagoGRAD, to improve the lives, education, and professional development of graduate students.”

That didn’t satisfy Gonzáles. “We do not want more focus groups, disempowered individual interventions, or hand-picked and closed-door dean’s councils whose opinions are ignored whenever it is convenient,” he writes in an e-mail. “We deserve a seat at the bargaining table and we will not stop organizing until our union is recognized and we’ve negotiated a fair contract.”

@Deannalisaacs

ARTS & CULTURE



Gypsy © MICHAEL COURIER

THEATER

E. Faye Butler plays Mama Rose as one great, ferocious growl

The rest of Porchlight's raucous revival of *Gypsy* shines around her.

By **TONY ADLER**

First, I'd just like to say, E. FAYE BUTLER AS ROSE!

But we'll come back around to that. In the meantime, a few words about *Gypsy: A Musical Fable*, the classic show with a book by Arthur Laurents, music by Jule Styne, and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, getting a strong-to-the-point-of-raucous revival now from Porchlight Music Theatre.

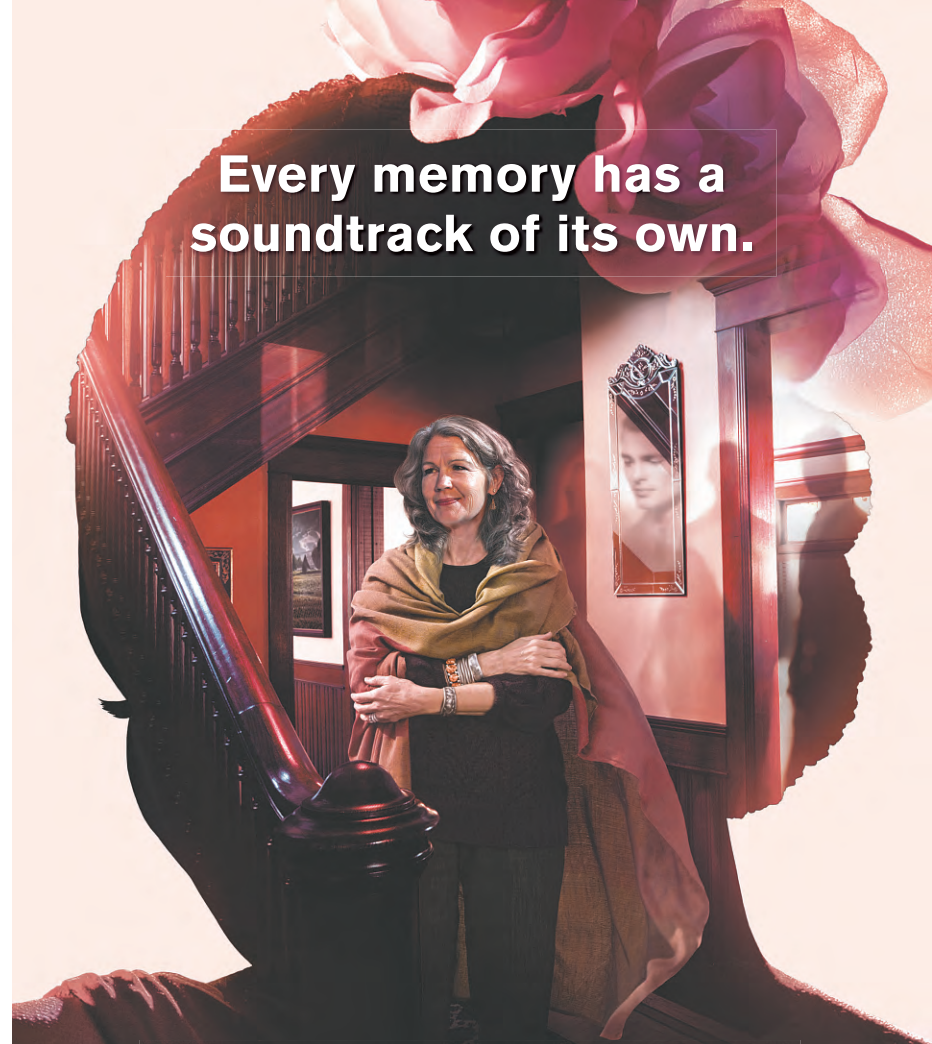
"Suggested," as the credits state, "by *Memoirs of Gypsy Rose Lee*," *Gypsy* is a loose biography, tracing Louise Hovick's real-life trajectory from awkward chorus kid, backing precocious little sister June in the family vaudeville act, to an unlikely stardom as the thinking man's stripper of Broadway burlesque. Far more than that, though, it's the tale of Louise and June's utterly obsessed mother, Rose—the woman who pushed, prodded, threatened, cajoled, tricked, and lied to everybody, including herself, to put her girls

in the limelight and keep them there, however desperately they hated it.

RR GYPSY: A MUSICAL FABLE
Through 11/25: Fri 8 PM, Sat 4 PM and 8 PM, Sun 6 PM; also Thu 11/1 and 11/8, 1:30 PM, and Fri 11/23, 4 PM, and 12/25, 2 PM, Ruth Page Center for the Arts, 1016 N. Dearborn, 773-777-9884, porchlightmusictheatre.org, \$51-\$66.

The story starts in the early 1920s and visits the Hovick girls year by year, as they grow older while continually performing the same cornball act. (A running gag has Rose freshening up her original "newsboy" concept with farm- and Spanish-themed motifs, only to leave the original "extra-extra-hey-look-at-the-headline" lyrics and dance moves intact.) Crowned with a cloud of curls, ➔

Every memory has a soundtrack of its own.



Lady in Denmark

By **Dael Orlandersmith**
Directed by **Chay Yew**

After the death of her husband, a Danish American woman finds solace in the hauntingly beautiful music of their favorite singer, Billie Holiday. A journey through the couple's time together—from the smoky jazz clubs of post-war Copenhagen, to the home they shared in present-day Chicago—*Lady in Denmark* is a passionate reflection on life and love.

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June is a proto-Shirley Temple nearly a decade before the real one was born, doing an act that's dimple cute but also creepily sexualized ("And if you're real good / I'll make you feel good"). The future Gypsy, meanwhile, adopts a kind of tomboy drag, the better to hide among the chorus boys with whom she's been lumped. Along the way they pick up a surrogate dad in the form of Herbie, their manager. A radical departure from the usual theatrical stepdad, he's a sweet guy who honest-to-God loves Rose.

Gypsy being a narrative built around well-known historical figures, you'd think verisimilitude would dictate that the roles of Rose, June, and Louise always be cast with white actors approximating the North Dakota German and Norwegian stock from whom the originals were descended. Certainly, that's the way things fell out over the course of 20 major stage productions—as well as a movie and a television special—since Ethel Merman

stamped her persona on Rose in the 1959 premiere. Even the version that ran in Singapore five years ago featured a Euro-American lead.

But that convention has started to break down, and the change can't be attributed to the *Hamilton* effect, either: Leslie Uggams is thought to have been the first black Rose, in a *Gypsy* done at the Connecticut Repertory Theatre in 1974, the year before Lin-Manuel Miranda's blockbuster premiered off-Broadway.

Uggams's matriarch presided over an ethnically mixed family, including a black June and a white Louise. Genetics play out more forcefully in the current Porchlight production, directed by Michael Weber. All three of the Hovick women are black here, as is Rose's father (J. Michael Jones). With a white actor (Larry Baldacci) playing various authority figures, from a stage manager and an impresario to Uncle Jocko, the hilariously acid star of a children's talent show (per Chuckles the Chipmunk in *A Thousand Clowns*), ev-

everything appears to be in place for a *Gypsy* designed to explore the dynamics of race on the American stage during the first half of the 20th century.

No such *Gypsy* materializes, though. The breaks Rose and her girls catch don't seem better or worse than those of any other troupe run by a maniac, white or black. Nobody scorns the Hovicks, forces them to enter theaters through a "colored" entrance, or confines them to the chitlin circuit. The multiracial chorus kids come across as one big, albeit underpaid and not entirely happy, family. If race matters at all in this staging, it's to demonstrate that *Gypsy* has crossed a cultural line. That it's entered so far into the American canon that it's beyond biography and impervious to petty conventions. That it's accrued enough resonance over half a century that it's no longer a showbiz tale, but one about children, parents, and unexpected transformations.

And thank God for that, because I'd hate to think mere verisimilitude might've kept E.

Faye Butler from playing Rose. Recent Roses have tended toward a certain delicacy: Uggams, Bernadette Peters, Patti LuPone. Butler takes her all the way back to Merman. Her Rose is one great, ferocious growl—the human embodiment of guts, grit, starch, brass, and spunk, not to say loneliness, pain, and compulsion. As the Porchlight folks well know, since they've put her name over the title, Butler by herself is worth the price of admission.

Yet she's far from by herself. José Antonio Garcia is poetically hapless as Herbie. Dawn Bless, Honey West, and Melissa Young are a collective hoot as Louise's mentors in the art of the ecdysiast. Aalon Smith conveys a deep frustration as the grown June, and Izzie Rose a perfect (and therefore somewhat disturbing) charmer as the Baby June. Daryn Whitney Harrell takes a while to metamorphose from Louise to Gypsy Rose Lee, but when she finally bites back at Rose she's convincing. **A**

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Cast and crew of *First Data Gold* © RIENY G. CUALOPING / ENERI

THEATER

Calling midwestern Asian- and Pacific Islander-American playwrights

Our Perspective: Asian-American Play Readings is already taking submissions for 2019.

THIS YEAR'S ITERATION of Our Perspective: Asian-American Play Readings, produced by Asian Improv Arts Midwest, wrapped up on Monday with a staged reading of *First Data Gold* by Tanuja Jagernauth at Steppenwolf Theatre, but curator Mia Park has already begun planning for 2019: submissions for the next series of readings, which is scheduled for January 28, are due next Thursday, November 1.

OUR PERSPECTIVE: ASIAN-AMERICAN PLAY READINGS
Submissions accepted
through 11/1, 708-386 9349,
asianimprovartsmw.org.

The series, says Park, is meant to highlight the work of Asian- and Pacific Islander-American (collectively abbreviated as APA) playwrights in the midwest. Each reading will be directed by a local APA director and performed by Chicago actors—who aren't necessarily APA, because the plays can be,

and have been, about people who are not Asian-American. The goal of the program is to encourage playwrights.

"There's a growing APA population in the Chicago theater world," says Park. "We don't even know how to define ourselves as a community. Whose voices are being represented here? There are a handful of costume designers and a handful of APA directors, but most of the theater artists are performers. I want to encourage all APA artists."

Our Perspective is definitely not a workshop, Park says. She accepts only completed work. In addition to Steppenwolf, the Goodman and Victory Gardens will also be hosting readings. None of the 11 plays in the 2018 series was picked up for a full production, but Park believes this is just the beginning.

"The coasts have so much infrastructure and support for APA theater artists," she says. "There's a deficit in the Chicago theater scene compared to New York and LA. We want to build an infrastructure, but we can only do it with people from here."

—AIMEE LEVITT

DANCE

Mirror, mirror on the wall

In the Joffrey's new *Swan Lake*, there's no lake and no love, but there's plenty of self-reflection.

EVEN BARYSHNIKOV HAS PROFESSED HIS BOREDOM with *Swan Lake*, the ballet that practically serves as a metonym for the entire genre. He isn't alone—must we endure the pomp of the court scenes when all anyone wants is to get on with the swans? Perhaps impatience with the four-act behemoth paved the way for abstract ballet. But would *Swan Lake* matter without the narrative (lust, love, the eternal search for the ideal mate, the idea that a woman without a marriage proposal is no better than an animal, etc) that holds its parts together?

Christopher Wheeldon's 2004 rendition doesn't reduce the familiar agony by shortening the ballet. Rather, Wheeldon strips the ballet of all attempts at storytelling by making the whole enterprise take place inside the walls of a ballet studio. Is ballet so out of touch that all it can imagine is itself? The mirror that serves as the central set piece seems a significant clue. Mercifully Wheeldon barely touches Act II and the Black Swan pas, with-



© CHERYL MANN

out which those who love the ballet would surely riot. But Wheeldon turns the international parade of princesses seeking Siegfried's suit in Act III into a gala dinner where dancers perform for patrons—including a literal striptease.

On opening night, Victoria Jaiani danced a frail, nearly moribund Odette with downcast eyes and endless, fluid limbs supported by Dylan Gutierrez's noble Siegfried. Her Odile was a dazzling contrast, dangerously seductive, brilliantly alive in every nuance. How could Siegfried choose otherwise? Why should we? —IRENE HSIAO

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THEATER

Moral dilemmas

Adventure Stage's *Adventures of Robin Hood* asks young audiences to ponder the nature of heroism.

Defining heroism is something even the youngest viewers at Adventure Stage's fast-paced, mostly lo-fi, family-friendly adaptation of *Robin Hood* seemed to have no trouble with during a preshow chat. It's the follow-up question that left the kids a little stumped: Who gets to define which actions are deemed heroic?

Twenty-plus characters and a concise mini epic about vigilante economics and moral relativism later, they still were short on answers. But answers don't seem like the endgame for Adventure Stage or Adrian Danzig's production—merely getting the wheels turning in young audience member's heads is enough of a goal. Warm and approachable performers Felipe Carrasco, Gabriel Fries, and Carlyle DePriest wear a lot of hats (literally) in a frenzied, puppet- and projection-filled run-through of the classic folk legend. It's so playful and frantic that, between all the accents and role swapping, this full-grown viewer had a little trouble keeping things straight, and I suspect some of that dynamism is what resulted in some fidgetiness among the little ones toward the end, even given what is par for the course in the young-audience genre.

Not all of that fidgeting was related to being antsy—one child, who looked about five, jumped and danced

and moved in his seat in tandem with the performers onstage until the final curtain. And it's to Adventure Stage's credit that the bilingual, socially conscious, nurturing environment it consistently fosters invites that sort of whole-hearted interaction. —**DAN JAKES** *THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD* Through 11/24: Sat 4 PM; also Fri 11/23, 11 AM and 3 PM, Vittum Theater, 1012 N. Noble, 773-342-4141, adventurestage.org, \$17, \$12 age 14 and under.

Get back in line

American Jornalero introduces us to two groups of men seeking work: Americans and Mexican immigrants.

Presented as part of Destinos, the second annual Chicago International Latino Theatre Festival, the midwest premiere of *American Jornalero* offers a tiny glimpse into the world of Mexican-immigrant day workers. Set on a New York street corner with a broken chain-link fence, this labor-centric take on *Waiting for Godot* follows a group of men as they wait day after day for the chance to be selected for a job. Unfortunately the benign action of a group of men of color standing on a street corner causes alarm. Writer Ed Cardona Jr. introduces the audience to another group of men on the same corner, unemployed white Americans who linger there for the sole purpose of harassing and intimidating the immigrants. Tensions flare and confrontation between the groups is inevitable, revealing the bravery and desperation of men willing to persist in their search

for work even with the ever-present threat of physical harm or ICE.

Director Nate Santana artfully uses the chain-link fence to highlight the acute class divide. All the men portrayed are concerned with being able to care for their families. On the one side we see recently unemployed Americans who own homes and are collecting unemployment; on the other side, we see the immigrants pooling pocket change for a cab and waiting at a pay phone for a call from wives they haven't seen in years. *American Jornalero* recognizes that life may never be equal or fair for immigrants in America, but asks if perhaps it might one day be humane. —**SHERI FLANDERS** *AMERICAN JORNALERO* Through 11/18: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, UrbanTheater, 2620 W. Division, 773-599-9280, teatrovista.org, \$25, \$20 students and seniors.

Our house

In Dolores Prida's semiautobiographical play *Casa Propia*, a Cuban immigrant family deals with home ownership.

The late Cuban-American columnist and playwright Dolores Prida aptly called her 1999 semiautobiographical play, about a matriarchal Cuban immigrant family's struggles with East Harlem home ownership, *A Room of One's Own* infused with *Lysistrata*. Conflicted trailblazer Olga, who believes owning land in America is meaningful vengeance against a society that largely denies her existence, fights to purchase property where her cynical daughter, Marilis, and domineering mother-in-law, Fefa, might establish permanent refuge, despite her lothario husband Manolo's insistence he can't be tied to one spot (as it might inhibit his incessant philandering, particularly with curvaceous new neighbor Yarisá). Watching over everything is the aged, enigmatic Fanny, the last Italian-American in this once all-Italian neighborhood.

Prida also called the play an opera without music, a description director Sándor Menéndez wisely disregards, injecting ensemble and solo songs floor-show style throughout the show's 80 minutes. Even more wisely, he turns Prida's overly familiar material into a kind of adult fairy tale (Olga's home is a five-foot-tall doll's house on wheels, for example), greatly emphasizing the script's metatheatricality and turning nearly stereotypical characters into iconic figures. It's an ingenious solution that elevates everything to a playfully mythic realm, complete with a childlike narrator cum mischievous angel.

As usual, Aguijón Theater assembles nimble, judicious players who breathe convincing life into their characters and find intoxicating rhythms in both spoken and sung dialogue. And when Alba Guerra as squeaky-voiced crone Fanny finally opens up and sings, you'll wish she'd go on all night. —**JUSTIN HAYFORD** *CASA PROPIA* Through 11/25: Fri-Sat 8 PM, Sun 6 PM, Aguijón Theater, 2707 N. Laramie, 773-637-5899, aguijontheater.org, \$25, \$15 students, teachers, and seniors.

Forget Boris Karloff

Remy Bumpo builds a stunning new *Frankenstein*.

Remy Bumpo Theatre Company presents Nick Dear's stunning minimalist reimagining of Mary Shelley's classic fable about male hubris. From the opening pantomimed vignettes of the monster's birth to his chilly arctic duel with his maker at the end, this production has forged a brand-new *Frankenstein*.

The entire tale is told from the creature's point of view. This has the effect of making an inherently sympathetic monster even more so, and it lays bare the arrogance of the doctor in the starkest terms. Revisiting a story of a man playing God at a time when scientists are experimenting with intuitive, sentient AI technology and the like couldn't be more timely. And the extent to which people can lose perspective when they're obsessing over their work is highlighted cleverly when the doctor's fiancée points out to him that his quest to create a man in his own image could have been accomplished in a much more traditional manner.

Everything from the spare stage set to the dance-like movements of the actors to the jarring lighting and expressionist makeup contributes to a complete renewal of a story most of us think we know everything about. There's not even a hint of Boris Karloff here. On the night I saw the play, Greg Matthew Anderson was the creature and Nick Sandys the doctor, but they swap roles throughout the run of the production. This is added incentive to see this unforgettable show more than once, though I would have been happy if it played again exactly the same way as soon as it ended. Ian Frank directed. —**DMITRY SAMAROV** *FRANKENSTEIN* Through 11/17: Wed-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 2:30 PM; also Sat 11/3 and 11/17, 2:30 PM, Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont, 773-975-8150, remybumpo.org, \$47.75-\$57.75.

Beware Neptune!

In *Idomeneo*, Mozart's music and human love prevail against an angry sea god.

A chance to revel in wonderful performances by two of Chicago's best gifts to the international opera scene is reason enough to recommend Lyric Opera's current production of Mozart's 1781 post-Trojan War tale, *Idomeneo*. Tenor (and Evanston native) Matthew Polenzani is the agonized title character, the king of Crete, and soprano (and Chicago native) Janai Brugger is Ilia, the captive Trojan princess who has won the heart of his son, Prince Idamante. Another reason: the Lyric Opera chorus, which we haven't seen enough of lately, is on glorious, full-throated display as a literal Greek chorus. And the Lyric Opera orchestra is back from its one-week strike, playing as if the only thing in the world that matters is Mozart's delicious, buoyant music. Soprano Erin Wall—in a killer triple-wide gown—is the nasty competition for Idamante's affection; mezzo-soprano Angela Brower is the prince, a role originally written for a castrato. Sir Andrew Davis conducts.

The plot centers on the human struggle to persevere in the face of inexplicably cruel forces—here in the form of the god Neptune demanding the ultimate parental sacrifice. Good eventually triumphs but, with two intermissions and the period penchant for repetition (18th-century audiences couldn't punch up more music on their phones when it was over), the show's nearly four hours long. The old-fashioned set on loan from the Met is effective in spite of its dominant element: a massive blank-eyed, door-mouthed face of Neptune, scary as your average Halloween mask. —**DEANNA ISAACS** *IDOMENEIO* Wed 10/24, 7 PM; Sun 10/28, 2 PM; and Fri 11/2, 7 PM, Lyric Opera, 20 N. Wacker, 312-827-5600, lyricopera.org, \$49-\$269.

Defying gravity

Pride Films and Plays's *It's Only a Play* lacks Broadway star power, but it's still good fun.

The 2014 Broadway revival of Terrence McNally's satirical farce had a cast list so jam-packed with celebrities

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Theatre Thursday attendees are invited to a pre-show reception in the Court Theatre lobby at 6:30pm; appetizers will be provided by Nella Pizza e Pasta. Following the 7:30 performance will be a post-show Behind-the-Screens event with artists of Manual Cinema to discover how they create their innovative work.

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READER



Frankenstein
JOE MAZZA

that it resembled a week's lineup of *Ellen* guests. Rupert Grint. Megan Mullally. Stockard Channing. F. Murray Abraham. Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick™. Part of its presumed fun, for an average \$122.86 a ticket, was seeing A-list film and television icons roast familiar backstage stage and screen archetypes, although of course by the end of the night they would extol the virtues of the Great White Way.

Whether or not the profoundly goofy, sharp-as-a-golf-ball broad strokes in *It's Only a Play* have legs outside that exact context is iffy. The scene is a Broadway opening-night afterparty, where the cynical, self-flagellating creatives and stakeholders behind new play *The Golden Egg* take turns dodging VIPs by escaping to an upstairs bedroom while frantically awaiting Ben Brantley's *New York Times* review. Jon Martinez's *Pride Films and Plays* production doesn't try too hard to resemble the specific, moneyed sector of the Broadway elite at which McNally pokes fun. In this version, in front of a wrinkled window curtain, the thirsty upstart coat boy who is eager to perform unsolicited selections from *Wicked* for unsuspecting producers looks about the same age as the jaded *Dancing With the Stars* TV actor he's waiting on.

But at its core, all its airing of grievances included, McNally's play is essentially a workplace hangout comedy (even the lingo-like theater critic gets to tag along for the fun), and Martinez's ensemble, however loosely cast, are agreeable to hang out with—particularly PFP newcomers Sarah Hayes, William Marquez, and Marika Mashburn. —**DAN JAKES** *IT'S ONLY A PLAY* Through 11/11: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Wed 11/7, 7:30 PM, *Pride Arts Center, 4139 N. Broadway, 866-811-4111, pridefilmsandplays.com, \$30-\$40, \$25 students, seniors, military (not valid Saturdays).*

RR More Martin McDonagh assholes

Two make an angry mob in *The Lonesome West*.

Martin McDonagh's characters are never likable. They are almost always awful, cruel, violent, weak, hate-filled people, poisoned by self-loathing, trapped in a fallen world they make worse simply by being there. Yet they are fascinating too.

In *The Lonesome West*, part of the Connemara trilogy (along with *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and *A Skull in Connemara*), he gives us two lonely bachelor brothers who despise each other and spend their days torturing each other, but for economic and psychological reasons can't live without each other.

That is McDonagh's gift as a writer, to deliver up characters we should despise but instead are fascinated

by, especially when they're played by actors of the caliber of those in AstonRep's revival, currently running at Raven Theatre. Dylan Todd and Robert Tobin clearly relish portraying the brothers; at every moment you can see a crazy glint in their eyes as they play off each other, indulging in an array of childish micro- and macro-aggressions.

McDonagh's play is not perfect. His dialogue is sometimes repetitious (intentionally so, but still it gets tedious). And after a while it's hard not to be weighed down by the bleak world he creates onstage. But this play also contains moments of sublime wit and power, especially in the hands of a director like Dana Anderson and her fine cast. —**JACK HELBIG** *THE LONESOME WEST* Through 11/18: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3:30 PM, *Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark, 773-828-9129, astonrep.com, \$25.*

An unexpected reprieve What happens when *There Is No Power for the Electric Chair*?

Bulgarian playwright Alexander Sekulov's 50-minute one-act, translated into English by Holly Karapetkova and directed by Zlatomir Moldovanski, receives its debut American staging here as part of Trap Open, Trap Door Theatre's off-night incubator series. Logan Hulick plays an unnamed convict who gets an unexpected reprieve from being fried in the electric chair after a cataclysmic event takes out the city's power grid. He spends the rest of the play attempting to con Leonard (Christopher Donaldson), his executioner, into letting him go free now that the world is over. The script gives almost no space to the convict's backstory, but he was evidently some kind of artist until he murdered a schoolteacher. He spends the show jumpsuited and bound, sometimes with a hood over his face, incessantly bagging on Leonard for his job, his bad smell, and the fact that he doesn't read. Prolonged and a churl, it's unclear how the dude thinks never shutting up will score him any points. At times, you almost wish that a backup generator would kick on or something.

Donaldson is a complete wet blanket as Leonard. His blunt replies keep any energy from building between him and the convict. There are a couple of decent rallies, like when the two debate the relative merits of electrocution and beheading with a scimitar, but nothing raucous or moving. The steady depletion of available oxygen in the room is much remarked upon, and by the end of the night, we felt it thinning out too. —**MAX MALLER** *THERE IS NO POWER FOR THE ELECTRIC CHAIR* Through 11/5: Sun-Mon 8 PM, *Trap Door Theatre, 1655 W. Cortland, 773-384-0494, trapdoortheatre.com, \$10.* ☐

SLOW BURN
Fri 10/26, 7:30 PM, Athenaeum Theatre,
2936 N. Southport, 773-935-6875,
slate.com, \$35.

COMEDY

Living history—again

Slow Burn re-creates the daily barrage of information during the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal.

By BRIANNA WELLEN



SLATE

How different would history look if the Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton presidencies had happened during the Twitter age? Watergate and Zippergate are now reduced to famous quotes and vaguely remembered details, but in real time they involved just as many characters, plot twists, and headlines as the dramas of the current administration. Now, on his Slate-sponsored podcast *Slow Burn*, journalist Leon Neyfakh is resurrecting these old scandals and putting listeners back in the moment before we knew how things would turn out.

Slow Burn's first season covered the nitty-gritty details of Watergate; its second, now in progress, is retreading the Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky scandal. "We were thinking it would be fun to do a deep dive into Watergate and try to tell the story of what really happened then," Neyfakh says, "but more importantly try to get a feel for whether living through it was in any way similar to the current moment when we have so much news every day."

Neyfakh is hosting a live show at the Athenaeum Theatre on Friday, October 26, with WBEZ host Jenn White and journalist Rick Perlstein to discuss Clinton, the underlying logic of a political scandal, and the distinct factors of Clinton's personality that may have made him prone to scandal. The show opens with a live performance, inspired by an episode of *Slow Burn*, that Neyfakh says will involve choreography.

The podcast approaches each scandal by first identifying the characters and the main plot, then by interviewing people who were present during and, in some cases, closely involved with what was happening. Neyfakh,

who started his journalism career covering culture and academia, says he knew very little about each scandal going into the project (he was in eighth grade during Clinton's impeachment), which makes it easier to reach listeners who also have limited memories of what actually happened. The most important lesson he learned was how to handle the onslaught of news from the current administration.

"I think this show has alerted me to the possibility that even though it feels right now that the pileup of news and having to deal with this much plot at one time is a lot, in fact, it felt that way back in the Watergate days and certainly in the Clinton days," Neyfakh says. "It feels a little bit like we're spending emotional and mental energy on stuff that won't turn out to matter. It's disheartening because it does matter. In 20 years people won't remember these details and won't really understand what it was like to live through [this] and why all these things really happened."

The team behind *Slow Burn* is currently choosing a topic for season three, but first they're working on defining whether the show will continue to be about scandals or will expand to look at other seismic moments in history. Neyfakh, an Oak Park native, isn't ruling out the possibility of a Chicago story, but it won't involve a president.

"The Obama administration was so scandal free that it would be hard to do a *Slow Burn* about them," Neyfakh laughs. "Maybe we could do an April Fool's episode about the tan suit." ☐

@BriannaWellen



MOVIES

Postmodern family

Director Tamara Jenkins returns with *Private Life*, a sharp and funny examination of infertility and art.

By BEN SACHS

It speaks to the complexity of Tamara Jenkins's *Private Life*, which recently became available for streaming on Netflix, that even its title can be read multiple ways. On the one hand, the film is indeed about private life: the plot centers on a middle-aged couple (Paul Giamatti and Kathryn Hahn) as they try to have a child, exploring the options of in vitro fertilization, adoption, and egg donation. On the other, the title is deeply ironic; the film is also about a crisis in American public life, namely our culture's suppression of intellectualism and the arts. Jenkins weaves her social concerns so gracefully

into her storytelling that the title's second meaning barely registers until after the movie ends. As in her previous directorial efforts, *Slums of Beverly Hills* (1998) and *The Savages* (2007), Jenkins displays such a gift for creating three-dimensional personages that the film succeeds smashingly as a character study. Yet her interest in character isn't limited to psychology; she also wants to consider how her subjects fit into a larger social system, and it's this aspect of her talent that makes *Private Life* such an affecting—and ultimately devastating—work.

It's also quite funny. Jenkins tends to deliver

her observations with a satirical tinge, and she has a knack for writing sharp one-liners as well. The movie's first extended sequence, set at an in vitro fertilization clinic, is frequently riotous, as Richard (Giamatti) and Rachel (Hahn) find themselves at the mercy of one comically fatuous medical professional after another. The specialist assigned to their case, Dr. Dordick (Denis O'Hare), is a marvelous caricature of unwitting condescension, recalling the cringe-inducing doctors of the Elaine May-scripted classic *Such Good Friends* (1971). After a botched IVF, Dordick explains to the couple that Richard is having trouble producing sperm, awkwardly comparing his reproductive system to a soda fountain. He suggests that they visit yet another specialist, who charges \$10,000 for a consultation, so they can address the issue.

Strapped for cash, Richard calls up his brother Charlie (John Carroll Lynch) to ask for money, and following their conversation, Jenkins introduces the film's third major character. Charlie's wife, Cynthia (Molly Shan-

non), takes a call from Sadie (Kayli Carter), her 25-year-old daughter from a previous marriage. Sadie is in the middle of a crisis of her own—she's struggling to finish her creative writing degree at Bard College and is generally unsure of how she wants to proceed with her life. ("Finishing college at 25 isn't exactly an achievement—it's damage control!" the high-strung Cynthia shouts, hinting at years of contention between the two women.) Without asking her parents for their input, Sadie declares that she'll go to Manhattan and crash with Richard and Rachel, with whom she's always been close, until she can get her act together. A few weeks later, she acts on her plan, moving in with the beleaguered, albeit still affectionate, couple.

Sadie's arrival in New York City comes after Dr. Dordick suggests that Richard and Rachel consider egg donation as a solution to their problem. The two had ruled it out some time before (Rachel compares it, not unreasonably, to science fiction), though they begin to take it seriously after a strained meeting with an adoption agent. The narrative strands come together so neatly that one can easily guess where the story will go from here: Richard and Rachel will ask Sadie to donate some of her oocytes and the three will develop into a postmodern family unit. This does happen, and fairly quickly at that; Jenkins is too sophisticated a filmmaker to draw out needless suspense, and besides she's less interested in plotting than in exploring the nuances of relationships. In her affection for the couple and her emotional dependence on them, Sadie suggests the daughter Richard and Rachel never had; at the same time, she's something of a stranger in their world, often inadvertently hurting the couple's feelings with observations about their lifestyle. ("Look at us," she says one morning over a relaxed breakfast in the couple's smallish East Village kitchen. "We're like an ad for assholes.")

The young woman's most stinging comments concern Richard and Rachel's past. Shortly after coming to Manhattan, Sadie goes off on her classmates at Bard, mocking their artistic aspirations by citing how hard it was for her step-uncle and aunt to make a living as theater artists. It's only in this scene that Jenkins reveals that the couple used to run an experimental theater company and that they had to shut it down because it didn't make any

ARTS & CULTURE

money—adding insult to injury, their former theater space is now home to a Citibank. While Rachel has found some success as a novelist, Richard has given up on the arts, going into business with an organic pickle company. (The name of his company, “The Pickle Guy,” doubles as a comic allusion to his difficulties with potency.) Sadie’s fixation on Richard and Rachel’s background in theater makes one realize how little they talk about art at all, despite living in a bohemian milieu. It’s as though they’re living in hiding.

Jenkins doesn’t devote much time to the couple’s past, nor does she have to—the humiliations Richard and Rachel suffer at present speaks to their fall from social significance. Yet the knowledge of their fall informs *Private Life*, adding metaphorical heft to the primary narrative. The couple’s inability to have a child mirrors their inability to pass something down, on a cultural level, to future generations, and this sense of futility makes them bittersweet, if not tragic figures. Giamatti and Hahn convey the characters’ frustration poignantly by refusing to make it the defining trait of their performances. They seem defeated from the start of the film—even their arguments quickly evaporate into passive-aggressive grumbling—yet their perseverance can be moving; ditto the way they respond to situations with self-effacing wit.

Consider an early scene where Richard and Rachel tell their adoption agent about having been scammed by a potential surrogate mother they met online, a charismatic young woman who lied about being pregnant in order to get two strangers’ attention. This episode, which Jenkins presents in a series of

flashbacks, would work as a stand-alone short film. Brilliantly edited and full of observant details, the passage explores various social ills of the Internet age—atomization, the failure to make meaningful interpersonal connection, the weird fluidity between the public and private—better than films that devote their entire running times to the issue. It concludes (like *Private Life* itself) with the couple pushing on, considering further options for how they might realize their dream of having progeny.

It feels sadly appropriate that Chicagoans will be seeing *Private Life* in solitary environments, as Netflix isn’t releasing the film theatrically here. The company’s model of premiering feature films online speaks to our culture’s growing tendency to make art a private experience, a trend that goes hand in hand with the defunding of the National Endowment for the Arts and arts education in public schools. Jenkins clearly sees the situation as bleak—her film has a pointedly chilly aesthetic, and she tends to make her characters seem isolated even when they’re sitting among other people. Even when Sadie gets invited to the arts colony Yaddo late in the film, the development feels vaguely melancholy; Jenkins presents the colony like a sanatorium for people with the disease of believing that art still matters in America. Still, Sadie’s ebullient personality shines through the darkness of *Private Life*, suggesting that her qualities as an individual—her wit, her compassion, and above all her creativity—might carry over to the public sphere. **A**

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Can You Ever Forgive Me?

MOVIES

Even better than the real thing

Melissa McCarthy and Richard E. Grant make likably unlikely scoundrels in *Can You Ever Forgive Me?*

By **DMITRY SAMAROV**

We first meet Lee Israel (Melissa McCarthy) as she's shouting obscenities at her office cubiclemates for objecting to her habit of having a full tumbler of scotch on her desk while she's copyediting. Moments later, she's told to pack her things. She's a schlubby, taciturn woman whose only emotional connection seems to be to her aging cat. Her rent is overdue, and nobody wants to publish any more of the biographies of women like Katharine Hepburn and Estée Lauder she's spent her career writing. She's at a crossroads. What will she do, and, more importantly for viewers of Marielle Heller's biopic, why should anyone care about what happens to her?

I've known people like Israel: sharp, idiosyncratic types who are often brilliant in one way or another but sabotage any possible success in their personal and professional lives by being what they perceive as honest, which in truth, more often than not, is just unnecessarily rude. They're convinced they're right and the world is wrong, and that they're owed

something. After a time, nobody wants to deal with them. It simply isn't worth the aggravation. Fortunately for Israel, she finds a unique path out of her self-imposed misery.

After chancing on a Fanny Brice letter tucked into a library book and selling it for a tidy sum at a local bookstore, Israel proceeds to forge a series of similar letters by the likes of Noël Coward and Dorothy Parker. She meets an old acquaintance named Jack Hock (Richard E. Grant) while getting sloshed at a dive bar, and he becomes her partner in crime. A flamboyant, leering type, Hock is a perfect salesman for her fakes until he's caught and then turns on Israel. Word gets around among rare book dealers, and Israel's scam comes to an end, but in the meantime she's had the time of her life.

Just as she did in her previous film, *Diary of a Teenage Girl* (2015), Heller is able to present fully dimensional portraits of flawed people within a larger picture of a particular time and place. The AIDS epidemic of the 80s overshadows

Israel and Hock's story. Both are gay, alcoholic, and—in Hock's case—recklessly promiscuous. But Heller presents all this matter-of-factly, as part of the story rather than its salacious subject. At no point are these two to be gawked at or pitied.

Israel is tactless and mean, but there's a fierce intelligence and longing for connection and respect under all her bluster. She has a great time faking famous people's letters not just because it pays her bills, but because it makes her feel wanted. Even though she's found out, pretending to be other people brings her closer to her true self. She does the wrong thing, but it makes her right in the end.

McCarthy and Grant are both note-perfect in their portrayal of two people at the end of their rope who have no business being friends, or getting away with as much as they do, or having such a good time along the way. I can't recall two more unlikable characters being so likable in a mainstream film in a long time. **A**

MOVIES

Antonio Lopez 1970: Sex, Fashion and Disco

Antonio Lopez was a brash illustrator and stylist who came to prominence during the nonstop party that was the New York fashion world in the 70s and 80s. He seems to have drawn, worked with, and slept with everyone, from Jessica Lange to Yves Saint Laurent to Andy Warhol. He lived fast and died young (of complications from AIDS in 1987). Survivors from that era sing his praises, stepping all over each other to claim he was the world's sexiest man, and the genius who revolutionized the way women were portrayed in fashion magazines. Writer and director James Crump obviously believes Lopez is worthy of a full-length documentary, but this viewer was left unconvinced. To someone outside the fashion world, his drawings of androgynous hippie girls look utterly ordinary and pretty dated, and his mugging, mustachioed face doesn't seem all that remarkable. Maybe you had to be there to get it. —**DMITRY SAMAROV** 95 min. *Fri 10/26, 2 and 7:45 PM; Sat 10/27, 4:45 PM; Sun 10/28, 5 PM; Mon 10/29, 7:45 PM; Tue 10/30, 6 PM; Wed 10/31, 7:45 PM; and Thu 11/1, 6:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

Border

Like the recent Brazilian masterpiece *Good Manners*, this Swedish feature begins as a naturalistic drama before transforming into a modern-day fairy tale. It never reaches the delirious heights of *Manners*, however; director Ali Abbasi maintains the same muted tone throughout (his color palette is also limited and bland), and the characters fail to evoke much sympathy. The film centers on an androgynous customs agent who possesses the ability to intuit people's emotional states by smelling them. She meets a stranger who looks curiously like she does and becomes drawn to him, ultimately letting him move in with her and her boyfriend. For a while the film hovers around notions of identity (both national and gender based), but it abandons them in the second half in favor of narrative trickery. I found this compelling as I watched it, though I don't feel I gained much from the experience. In Swedish with subtitles. —**BEN SACHS** R, 110 min. *Fri 10/26-Mon 10/29, 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30 PM; Tue 10/30-Wed 10/31, 2, 4:30, and 7 PM; Thu 11/1, 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30 PM. Music Box*

RR Garry Winogrand: All Things Are Photographable

Compulsive, obsessive, driven—none of these adjectives adequately describes Garry Winogrand, a giant among mid-20th-century photographers, whose lifetime output of images numbers in the hundreds of thousands, and whose shots of New York in the 1960s defined a city and an era. Inseparable from his Leica 35-millimeter camera, Winogrand was always looking for the moment that both caught the essence of random human encounters and commented on the culture at large. Although he died in 1984, he seems very much alive in Sasha Waters Freyer's richly detailed documentary, where she adroitly employs his taped conversations with fellow photographer Jay Maisel to convey Winogrand's



Garry Winogrand:
All Things Are
Photographable

outspoken, energetic, ultramasculine persona. Talking heads acknowledging Winogrand's extensive influence include *Mad Men* creator Matthew Weiner and novelist and cultural critic Geoff Dyer, author of *The Street Philosophy* of Garry Winogrand, a parallel meditation on an artist ripe for reappraisal. —**ANDREA GRONVALL** 90 min. Fri 10/26, 3:45 and 6 PM; Sat 10/27, 8 PM; Sun 10/28, 3:15 PM; Mon 10/29, 7:45 PM; Tue 10/30, 8 PM; Wed 10/31, 6 PM; and Thu 11/1, 8:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

Hunter Killer

Gerard Butler plays an American submarine commander navigating treacherous Russian waters in this diverting action flick, based on the novel *Firing Point*, by Don Keith and George Wallace. The plot swings from the sub's crew on a top-secret mission to a quartet of Navy SEALs with whom the sub is set to rendezvous to the Washington brass devising a game plan at the Pentagon, all while a military coup unfolds on Russian soil. Made with the full support of the U.S. Navy, the film is largely uncontroversial, save for a climax that could double as an advertisement for the navy and America itself. Still, director Donovan Marsh is likely to induce more gasps than eye rolls with some enthralling twists and high-octane sequences. With Gary Oldman, Common, and Linda Cardellini. —**LEAH PICKETT** R, 121 min. Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14 Theaters, Cicero Showplace 14, City North 14, Crown Village 18, Ford City, Lake, River East 21, Showplace 14 Galewood Crossings, Showplace ICON, Webster Place 11

Johnny English Strikes Again

Rowan Atkinson returns in the third installment of his played-out James Bond send-up. The kooky MI7 agent is again called into action after England is plagued by a series of cyberterror attacks that can only be thwarted by a Zuckerbergesque tech autocrat, and all of the country's other, more competent spies are compromised. Johnny's lack of a digital footprint and his total nonunderstanding of technology become assets even as he declines a hybrid for a gas-guzzling Aston Martin and scoffs at the idea of nonviolent weapons. Despite the jokes made at his expense, Johnny still manages to save the day, making one wonder if this isn't actually an endorsement of his outdated ideology. The formidable Emma Thompson costars as a harpy prime minister, and Olga Kurylenko plays the unlikely love interest; mediocre white men somehow manage to hoodwink them both. With Ben Miller and Jake Lacy. —**KATHLEEN SACHS** PG, 89 min. Century 12 and CineArts 6, Crown Village 18, Showplace ICON, Webster Place 11

Mid90s

Jonah Hill's directorial debut, which he also wrote, is an earnest effort that nonetheless relies too heavily on gimmicks. Shot on 16-millimeter in an aspect ratio of 1.33:1, its aesthetic—reminiscent of lo-fi films from the eponymous era—is accomplished (the cinematographer, Christopher Blauvelt, worked under the legendary Harris Savides), but the enervated plot falls short of its visual ambition. The film follows 13-year-old Stevie (Sunny Suljic, a real charmer) as he makes friends with a group of skateboarders who have nicknames like Fuckshit and Fourth Grade. Like them, he lives amid familial discord, with a spacy single mother (the perpetually underrated Katherine Waterston) and an abusive, though complicated, older brother (Lucas Hedges). Hill seems to have been more concerned with finding the perfect vintage Ren & Stimpy shirt than developing the film into something more than a vehicle for signaling nostalgia, but he's not without promise as a director. —**KATHLEEN SACHS** R, 84 min. AMC Dine-In Theatres Block 37, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Cicero Showplace 14, Crown Village 18, Lake, Landmark's Century Centre, River East 21, Showplace ICON, Webster Place 11

RR The Price of Everything

Sly gallows humor pervades this kaleidoscopic documentary about the frenzied global art market, which, fueled by an influx of international buyers, is estimated at around \$58 billion and rising (for now). Director Nathaniel Kahn (*My Architect*) marshals a lively parade of its players, from those with deep pockets, like Chicago collectors and philanthropists Stefan Edlis and Gael Neeson, to those whose are threadbare, such as painter Larry Poons, an artist who was hot in the 60s and 70s, then fell from favor, and now seems poised for a comeback. At the center is whip-smart Amy Cappellazzo, chairman of Sotheby's Fine Art Division, a dynamic personality who stokes commerce by assiduously matching patrons with artists. An ingenious marketer himself, pop art's reigning rock star, Jeff Koons, introduces his 2-D knockoffs of the great masters, to which he adds gazing balls, three-dimensional reflectors that promote the illusion that owner and object are one. —**ANDREA GRONVALL** 98 min. Fri 10/26-Sun 10/28, 10:35 and 11:35 AM, 12:45, 1:45, 2:55, 5:05, 5:55, 7:15, 8:10, and 9:25 PM; Mon 10/28-Thu 11/1, 11 AM, 1:10, 1:45, 3:20, 5:30, 5:55, 7:40, 8:10, and 9:50 PM. Arclight Chicago

Vaya

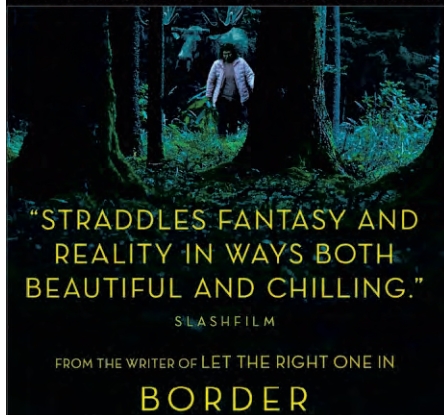
This South African drama paints a dark portrait of life in Johannesburg, moving between three unrelated

ARTS & CULTURE

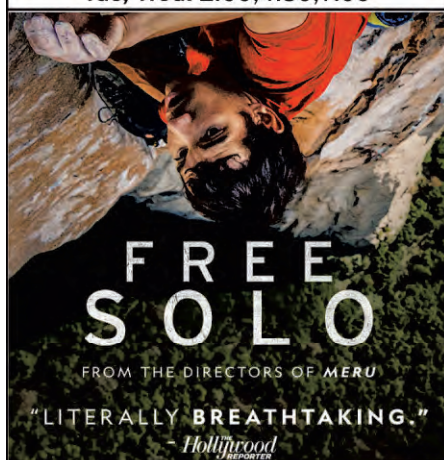
stories to consider different risks the city presents to newcomers. In one tale, a young man arrives from the countryside to retrieve the corpse of his recently deceased father, only to discover that the old man had kept a second family in town. Meanwhile, another young man comes to Johannesburg in search of work and gets sucked into the criminal underground. The third tale also concerns a young person looking for work, in this case a woman in charge of her young niece; her progress is stymied time and again by South Africa's chauvinistic culture. This is an eye-opening social study, though never really satisfying in its storytelling; the tone is monotonously grim and the cast generally flat. Akin Omotoso directed. In Zulu with subtitles. —**BEN SACHS** 106 min. Fri 10/26, 7 PM; Sat 10/27, 2:30, 4:45, 7, and 9:15 PM; Sun 10/28, 2:30, 4:45, and 7 PM; Mon 10/29-Wed 10/31, 7 PM. Facets Cinematheque

What They Had

This middling snooze-fest demonstrates that good performances, a plausible story line, and relatable emotional content are not enough to make a movie interesting. Hilary Swank and Michael Shannon play grown siblings whose mother (Blythe Danner) is in an advanced stage of Alzheimer's disease; Shannon's character wants to move her to an assisted living facility, while the father (Robert Forster) insists on keeping her at home. First-time writer-director Elizabeth Chomko hits every plot point you'd expect to find in this sort of tasteful family drama: the grown children argue over what to do with their mother, confront their father for failing to provide them with emotional support, recognize their own personal shortcomings, etc. Perhaps the best thing about the film is that it evokes memories of better, more distinctive movies, namely Sarah Polley's *Away From Her* (2006) and Tamara Jenkins's *The Savages* (2007). —**BEN SACHS** R, 101 min. Century 12 and CineArts 6, Landmark's Century Centre



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The Reader's guaranteed unboring homegrown Halloween mix

Nothing against “Monster Mash,” but Chicago has spawned lots of scary songs that sound good all year—these 13 tracks cover house, psych rock, techno, boogie, hip-hop, extreme metal, pop punk, and more.

By LEOR GALIL

In 1974, a few months after the runaway critical and box-office success of horror masterpiece *The Exorcist*, New York label Crunch released *The Rite of Exorcism*, according to its sleeve an “actual and authentic” recording of an exorcism. Masterminded by a Connecticut priest named Patrick J. Berkery, *The Rite of Exorcism* was unsurprisingly no such thing: it was largely the work of five actors in a 51st Street studio in Manhattan. The LP opens with an incongruously upbeat funk track punctuated by piercing screams—an endearingly inept attempt to establish a tense, frightening atmosphere—and then segues into a dramatization that sounds like a tedious 50s radio play.

In 2006 WFMU’s Beware of the Blog called *The Rite of Exorcism* a classic flea-market record, and in fact I found my copy at a record fair a few years ago. I’ve hardly touched it since, but I can still picture its startlingly lurid cover artwork: the face of a bug-eyed devil, rendered mostly in blood red and black in such tight close-up you can practically smell his breath.

Listeners with a taste for horror, kitsch, or a combination of the two have rarely had to look far for “scary” curiosities like this. Even Spotify has a playlist of Halloween sound effects, so you don’t have to try to flip an LP in your Edward Scissorhands costume. The problem is, they’re almost all as boring as listening to the PA in a train station. Reasonable people can disagree about what Halloween stands for, but under no circumstances should it be dull.

To celebrate All Hallows’ Eve this year, I put together a mix of songs by Chicagoans that have some connection—in tone, in title, in subject matter—to our Svengooliest holiday. Sometimes the link is a stretch, I admit, but together they demonstrate that Halloween has more dimensions to it than the latest *Saw* movie or a sexy zombie bar crawl.

In order to acknowledge more of Chicago’s long history of spooky music, I avoided some on-the-nose choices, among



COLLEEN DURKIN

them Ministry’s “Everyday (Is Halloween),” half of Alkaline Trio’s catalog, Lake of Dracula’s “Dracula Killed Frankenstein,” and almost everything by the Goblins (fronted by *Reader* contributor Jake Austen, aka the Phantom Creeper) and Gramps the Vamp. I also took suggestions from Austen, from my editor Philip Montoro, and from a few other colleagues and friends, among them past and present *Reader* editors Kevin Warwick and Jamie Ludwig and Secret History of Chicago Music creator Steve Krakow. I considered a couple drill songs—notably Fredo Santana’s “Kill U on Camera,” from *Fredo Kruger 2*—but despite the obvious connection to *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, I was worried that by picking it I’d feed into racist fears of young black men as somehow inherently dangerous.

I wanted to winnow the dozens of tracks on my initial list—I had to get down to 13, obviously—and that forced me to cut

great songs by 80s punks the Effigies (“Haunted Town”), techno producer DJ Rush (“Childs Play”), and trad-metal outfit Satan’s Hallow (“Satan’s Hallow”). This isn’t meant to be a definitive collection, but I can promise that it’ll make for a less boring Halloween.

COVEN

“Wicked Woman” (1969)

Formed in 1967, psych-rockers Coven embraced the occult more than a decade before the satanic panic of the 80s forever linked heavy metal and the devil in the public imagination. Front woman Jinx Dawson grew up immersed in the teachings of the Left Hand Path, and Coven practiced eldritch rituals on- and offstage—Dawson also claims to have been the first person to “throw the horns” in a rock ‘n’ roll context. Mercury ➔

BOZ SCAGGS

Boz returns to his blues roots with his latest *Out of the Blues Tour*.

SAT, NOV 03

out of the blues tour

RICHARD MARX

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THU, NOV 15

DAVID CROSBY & FRIENDS

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MON, NOV 19



THE MANHATTAN TRANSFER

SAT, NOV 24 The legendary quartet has been awarded ten Grammy Awards and was inducted into the Vocal Group Hall of Fame.

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continued from 26

Records pulled their 1969 debut, *Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Souls*, after the Manson family murders, in part because (as Dawson told *Iron Fist* magazine in 2016) Charles Manson had been photographed posing with the Coven LP outside a Tower Records. Dawson’s dark personal magnetism and feral vocals give Coven’s music an alluring air of danger, and on the no-nonsense *Witchcraft* single “Wicked Woman” she sounds like she can raise the dead.

L.E.P. BOGUS BOYS FEATURING LUPE FIASCO

“Zombie Land” (2011)

Chicago gangsta-rap duo L.E.P. Bogus Boys liked to drop mixtapes on Halloween, and “Zombie Land” appears on *Now or Neva*, which came out on October 31, 2011. MCs Count and Moonie deliver their street-rap snapshots of robberies, shootouts, and confrontations with cops in language saturated with horror-movie iconography—if you assume gangsta-rap lyrics are strictly autobiographical, you’ll probably be confused by the song’s hook, which brings all the duo’s enemies to life as zombies. This is hardly the only L.E.P. song to reference Halloween horror, but it does include Lupe Fiasco referencing *Candyman* and, um, *Pumpkinhead*.

BEAU WANZER

“Basement Dwellers” (2014)

It’s easy to take producer Beau Wanzer for granted in Chicago—he’s been running monthly progressive electronic-music series Hot on the Heels at Danny’s for almost 12 years—but he’s also a renowned figure in the international underground electronic scene, notably as half of techno duo Juzer and one-third of experimental trio Mutant Beat Dance. More pertinent to our purpose here, he loves horror films, as anyone who’s heard his solo recordings ought to notice. The muffled synths and constipated drum patterns of the misanthropic “Basement Dwellers,” from his untitled 2014 debut album, make it sound like dance music for people who are more afraid of dancing than they are of the dark.

CURTIS MAYFIELD

“Sweet Exorcist” (1974)

In May 1974, soul legend Curtis Mayfield told *Jet* that his new LP, *Sweet Exorcist*, had nothing to do with *The Exorcist*—in fact he insisted that he’d avoided seeing the film till finishing the album. The title track uses exorcism as a metaphor for love driving out the bad spirits of depression, so in that sense it’s not actually scary at all. I included this song because it’s actually really good (notwithstanding the middling review *Rolling Stone* gave the album), and its title let me do it. “Sweet Exorcist” is a sumptuous, understated tune, with subtle funk keys, wah-guitar flourishes, and sweet vocals that come together for an irresistible hook. You’re not hurting anybody if you decide to pretend it’s a response to Linda Blair’s breakout film—in case it helps, the Mayfield album *does* have a pile of bones on the cover.

T. VALENTINE WITH DADDY LONG LEGS

“The Vampire” (2012)

In 1957 Chicago outsider musician Thurmon Valentine recruited a few women to act in a play he’d written after stumbling across a vampire movie on TV. He called his play *The Vampire*, naturally, and he and his cast staged it in south-side clubs for the next two years. His output since then has been mostly mu-

sical, though, which suits my purposes—and his work became marginally less obscure in 2000, when Norton Records issued a T. Valentine compilation (which ends with a radio spot for *The Vampire*). In 2012 Valentine released an album called *The Vampire*, a full-length collaboration with New York blues-rockers Daddy Long Legs. Atop the bleak, torpid vamp of the title track, he howls and stutters about a woman on South Michigan Avenue who endures a home invasion by the titular sanguinary coffin-sleeper.

MACABRE

“Dr. Holmes (He Stripped Their Bones)” (1989)

Extreme-metal jesters Macabre have been retelling the same joke for more than three decades: basically, they make silly songs about real-life serial killers. They call it “murder metal,” and at best it’s a rough chuckle—not everybody will see the humor in a tune about Jeffrey Dahmer that spoofs the Oompa Loompa song from *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* (“Oompa loompa doopity dah / Jeffrey loved eating men from gay bars”). The lyrics of “Dr. Holmes (He Stripped Their Bones),” from the band’s 1989 full-length debut, *Gloom*, are a little easier to take because they’re about someone much further in the past: H.H. Holmes, the notorious Devil in the White City active during the 1893 World’s Fair. And whiplash-inducing metal is actually a pretty good setting for clownish songwriting about homicide—vocalists Corporate Death and Nefarious can barely keep up with the stampeding drums as they holler “He melted their flesh in acid bath / And sold their bones in classified ads.”

THE TROLL

“Werewolf & Witchbreath” (1968)

Previously known as the Trolls, this short-lived band started out playing garage rock before transitioning to wide-screen psychedelia for their only album, 1968’s fanciful *Animated Music*—which closes with the proto-metal stomper “Werewolf & Witchbreath.” Distorted guitars, distraught screams, and disturbing keyboard licks accompany lyrics about a variety of potentially malevolent supernatural varmints, but the song’s paisley pizzazz and dainty string arrangements keep it playfully spooky rather than genuinely harrowing.

RICH JONES

“Mothman” (2017)

Last summer, after Chicago experienced a rash of mothman sightings, rapper-singer Rich Jones decided to do something about it. He paid tribute to the cryptid with a low-key, funky tune that used vocal processing to give the “creature” a cameo. Some people believe the mothman to be a harbinger of doom, but Jones is the friendliest guy in Chicago hip-hop—in this context, the flying humanoid seems pretty chill too, even though Jones raps that if they ever cross paths he’d play dead. Sometimes we could stand to let our monsters be whimsical too.

TOUCHED BY GHOUL

“Nice Corpse” (2016)

Postpunk band Touched by Ghoul got on my long list by virtue of their name alone, and the consistent screwing around with horror-movie tropes on their 2016 debut, *Murder Circus*, sealed the deal. (Full disclosure: guitarist and cofounder Andrea Bauer is a former *Reader* photo editor.) On “Nice Corpse” front woman Angela Mullenhour sings about stumbling through

a graveyard, though at that point this dark, ferocious rager sounds its most euphoric—the band seem to want to say that terrifying shit can also be fun and life-giving.

GENE HUNT

“Freddy’s Dead” (1999)

Gene Hunt began DJing in 1986 at age 13, and within a couple years he was apprenticed to house icon Ron Hardy. Even when Hunt briefly retired from performing live in 1994, he continued to release music, including the 1999 track “Freddy’s Dead.” Released on the 1999 compilation *Gene Hunt Classics* and reissued in 2014 by L.A. Club Resource as a 12-inch single, this dance-floor filler opens with a long sample from a *Nightmare on Elm Street* movie superimposed onto a queasy, hyperactive percussion loop. You never hear Freddy Krueger after that, but Hunt maintains an aura of foreboding even without him.

SCREECHING WEASEL

“Bates Motel” (1987)

Most of Screeching Weasel’s 1987 self-titled debut is powered by the aggression of hardcore, but its ode to *Psycho* prefigures the jocular, melodic style that would make the band suburban pop-punk heroes. Front man Ben Weasel keeps his usual belligerence under tight control as he belts out a brief sketch of Norman Bates’s, um, family issues. If you listen to any pop punk at all, you know that the dudes in those bands love to make juvenile jokes about jerking off—but most of them can only fantasize about a line as perfectly terrible as “And don’t ever call me Master Bates.”

HIGH SPIRITS

“Haunted by Love” (2016)

Ludicrously prolific metal polymath Chris Black loves the New Wave of British Heavy Metal. His band High Spirits, which began as a solo project in 2009, makes power rock worthy of the genre’s 80s heyday. Built on crisp, brisk guitars, stadium-size drums, and sweet vocal harmonies, the ballad “Haunted by Love” (from 2016’s *Motivator*) turns a tale of unrequited love into a ghost story. That sort of thing can take a lot out of you, even if nobody literally buries you in a hole in the ground.

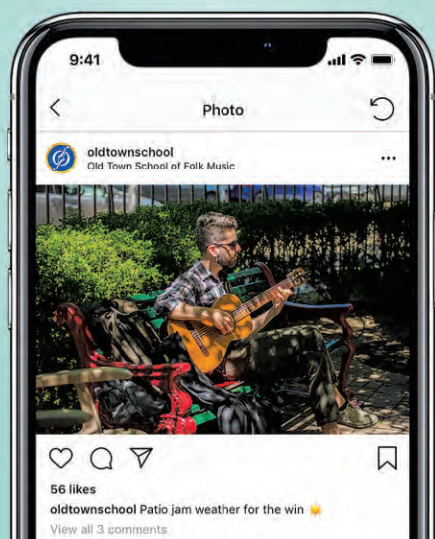
HARRY MANFREDINI & HOT ICE

“Theme From Friday the 13th Part 3” (1982)

Harry Manfredini was living in New Jersey when he wrote the score for the 1980 slasher classic *Friday the 13th*, but he was born in Chicago and earned a bachelors degree in music education from DePaul. Remember the eerie, echoing whisper of *ki-ki-ki ma-ma-ma* that tells you the killer is fixing to remove an important portion of a protagonist? Now you know who to thank for that. For the franchise’s 3-D third installment, Manfredini and producer Michael Zager teamed up with disco group Hot Ice for a boogie spin on the main theme. Its prickly, oscillating synth ostinato and that infamous whisper create a genuinely creepy mood, but that’s undercut somewhat by a “spooky” theremin-like keyboard line that sounds like an electronic greeting card trying to sing along to a werewolf movie. Gramavision released “Theme From Friday the 13th Part 3” as a 12-inch in 1982, and it should be part of every boogie obsessive’s Halloween DJ set. 

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PICK OF THE WEEK

Don't let anyone tell you about Chicago rap till they've seen Kweku Collins and Joseph Chilliams



KWEKU COLLINS, JOSEPH CHILLIAMS, CHRISTIAN JALON
Fri 10/26, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln, \$17, \$15.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST; PHOTO BY HANNAH SIEGFRIED

WHEN THE MORNING show on Fox 32 invited Chicago rapper and Pivot Gang member **Joseph Chilliams** to perform on October 3, his appearance was hooked to an informal celebration of the 2004 comedy *Mean Girls*; lead actress Lindsey Lohan mentions October 3 in a throwaway scene, and the date has since become affectionately known as “Mean Girls Day” by superfans everywhere. Chilliams is one such *Mean Girls* fanatic. As he said on Fox, “I realized it was probably the best movie ever made and everyone should love this movie, if they don’t already.” Chilliams’s June EP, *The Plastics*, is the latest part of his proselytizing effort. As the title suggests, these songs are entrenched in the mythos and language of *Mean Girls*, but Chilliams goes beyond straight homage; he employs references to the movie within pop-culture-

riddled raps in order to say something clever and disarming about the world he’s built with his music. On “You Think You’re Pretty,” Chilliams twists a barbed compliment from the film’s narrative into a love song, and compares his romantic interest to the crushable background character Glenn Coco before delivering the line “I love you like / Pusha-T love cooked crack.” His set tonight is one of the first on his fall tour with headliner **Kweku Collins**, the Evanston rapper who’s been working on a follow-up to his wistful 2017 EP, *Grey* (Closed Sessions), after dropping two singles, “ET” and “Sisko and Kasidy,” this year. Both tracks show him on an upward ascent, but the latter, a bleary, mournful collaboration with label-mate Ajani Jones, displays Collins’s ability to make a pop hook that demands to be replayed once the song ends. —LEOR GALIL



Mitski BAO NGO

THURSDAY25

MITSKI Overcoats open. 7:30 PM, the Vic, 3145 N. Sheffield, sold out.

At 27, indie rocker Mitski Miyawaki is green enough still to be an unknown—at least to the young pop fans who caught her opening performances during Lorde’s recent arena tour—but established enough for her to fear being pigeonholed. On her breakthrough 2016 album, *Puberty 2*, Mitski explored a color gradient of sadness through white-knuckle rock; the songs on the record are lifelike and multidimensional, but the incredible response it received left her concerned she’d become typecast. “I wanted to make sure that I was always seen as a sort of artist in a holistic sense,” she recently told British culture magazine the *Outline*. “I didn’t want to be known as the person to turn to if you want a distorted guitar. I wanted to be bigger than that. I wanted to be more complex and human than that.” Mitski broadens her musical palette with her fifth album, August’s *Be the Cowboy* (Dead Oceans): synths squiggle through “Why Didn’t You Stop Me,” horns beckon the supsize chorus on “Remember My Name,” and a frictionless postdisco guitar line sets the mood for “Nobody.” She remains a penetrating and empathetic lyricist, which is evident when she sings about a woman who sacrificed her individuality to a lifetime of marriage on “Me and My Husband.” Through exacting language and ironclad voice, Mitski brings care and warmth to a complex, bittersweet story. —LEOR GALIL

NINE INCH NAILS See also *Friday and Saturday*. The *Jesus and Mary Chain* and *Gabe Gurnsey* open. 7 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 1106 W. Lawrence, sold out. 17+

It’s no surprise the raw aggression that catapulted Nine Inch Nails into mainstream success in the early 90s is still coursing through its founder, Trent Reznor, during this fall’s Cold and Black and Infinite tour; it offers a concert experience

rooted in a dark world that's experiencing some truly tumultuous times. An eternally misanthropic mainstay of industrial rock, Reznor is in a sense creating a space for fans to release any multitude of tensions, a chance to rage into the night, and, as suggested on "God Break Down the Door," the single from *Bad Witch*, the final piece in NIN's recent EP trilogy, "remove the pain and push it back in." And yes, there is a political edge to this tour: an updated version of "The Great Destroyer" features sound bites from our current president, and there are frequent timely appearances of the band's cover of David Bowie's "I'm Afraid of Americans." A stripped-down stage setup provides a stark aesthetic, while Nine Inch Nails power through a mix of essentials and unexpected rarities many fans have clamored for years to hear live, including the debut of "The Perfect Drug," a 1997 track Reznor famously had never played onstage before this tour. This free-form nature means the band are letting loose and jumping between different points of their catalog from night to night, a departure for a group long known for their minimal yet complex lighting and production cues that have sometimes led to standardized set lists for entire tours. Adding to it all is the impressive live iteration of Nine Inch Nails, which includes the only other full-time band member, Atticus Ross (who officially joined in 2016), alongside longtime collaborators Robin Fink, Alessandro Cortini, and Illan Rubin. All of these factors are among the reasons Nine Inch Nails have been selling out several of their multnight runs during this tour—including these three nights at the Aragon. In June I trekked to Vegas just to see them, and after witnessing a band that feel like they're in their prime 30 years after they formed, and leaving with an immense sense of release, having escaped the outside world for a few hours, I immediately purchased tickets for the entire Chicago run. In these seemingly dark times, Nine Inch Nails offer a momentary embrace of warmth and light that, even if born out of collective anger, feels like a stark contrast to cold, black, and infinite. —LISA WHITE

FRIDAY 26

KWEKU COLLINS, JOSEPH CHILLIAMS See *Pick of the Week*, page 30. *Christian JaLon opens. 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln, \$17. \$15. ALL*

DOM FLEMONS *The Brother Brothers open. 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, 4545 N. Lincoln, \$26, \$24 members. ALL*

Modern-day musicologist Dom Flemons first appeared in the spotlight in the 2000s as a member of the Carolina Chocolate Drops, a group of young black musicians keeping the African-American string-band tradition alive. After winning a Grammy in 2010 for Best Traditional Folk Recording, the original members of the group began to go their separate ways (singer and multi-instrumentalist Rhiannon Giddens is the only remaining cofounder). Flemons, who left in 2013, has been living up to his songster billing ever since. His most recent album, *Dom Flemons Presents Black Cowboys* (Smithsonian Folkways), focuses on the music African-Americans created during the westward migration of the 1800s. Western music (as in "country and western") was already in full bloom during this era, and black cowboys brought a distinctly bluesy element to it that has continued to reverberate since. To Flemons's credit, the record doesn't sound like a genre exercise or a period piece. His songs fit just as easily in a blues context as in a country situation, and he delivers more than enough fingerpicking to go around. When the term "songster" was popularized after the Reconstruction era and the end of slavery, it was used to describe the music of black musicians whose set lists contained an eclectic mix of musical styles. Yes, they could double down on the blues, but they could switch to a hoedown or a waltz on a dime if they had to rock the party. Flemons does an excellent job of keeping this strain going strong. —JAMES PORTER ➔



Nine Inch Nails
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OCT 25 POND	OCT 29 PHOEBE ROBINSON: EVERYTHING'S TRASH, BUT IT'S OKAY.	NOV 08 LOS CAMPESINOS!
OCT 26 CALL YOUR GIRLFRIEND	NOV 02 TY SEGALL (SOLO ACOUSTIC)	NOV 09 WILD NOTHING
OCT 27 JONATHAN RICHMAN	NOV 04 (SANDY) ALEX G	NOV 10 RED BULL MUSIC PRESENTS CUPCAKKE
OCT 27-28 YAEJI	NOV 06 TORO Y MOI	NOV 11 THE MUSIC OF MICHAEL JACKSON FOR KIDS
OCT 28 THE MUSIC OF PHISH FOR KIDS	NOV 07 TENNIS SOLO IN STEREO TOUR	NOV 11 GRAPETOOTH

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NOV 06  FAT TUESDAYS: BIG SHOULDERS BRASS BAND	NOV 07  JEFF LORBER FUSION	NOV 11  CHAMBER SUNDAYS WITH BOW & HAMMER
OCT 25 WGCI #HOMETURF LIVE FEATURING WILLIE TAYLOR	OCT 27 AFRO FUSION HALLOWEEN PARTY	OCT 31 HYDE PARK TEEN HALLOWEEN 2018
OCT 26 MUMU FRESH	OCT 28 SHAKE SUMTHIN' WORK!	OCT 31 TRICK OR TREAT: A HALLOWEEN COSTUME PARTY
OCT 26 MINUS WHALE HAVE A HALLOWEEN PARTY!	OCT 29 SNEAKLIGHTS OCTOBER EDITION!	NOV 02 FIRST FRIDAY CHICAGO ANNIVERSARY
OCT 27 CHIC-A-GO-GO HALLOWEEN PARTY	OCT 30 COUNTRY GRAMMAR: HALLOWEEN EDITION W/ DJ SLOW MO	NOV 03 LIGHTS OUT: AN ALL BLACK AFFAIR

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MUSIC

continued from 31

NINE INCH NAILS See Thursday. *The Jesus and Mary Chain* and *Death* in Vegas open. 7 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 1106 W. Lawrence, sold out. 17+

SATURDAY 27

LAKE STREET DIVE Jalen N'Gonda opens. 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 4746 N. Racine, sold out. 18+

Rachael Price might not be a household name, but the Boston singer is one of the greatest American singers alive. Her rich, dexterous alto can caress a jazzy change, rough up a soul groove, or shout down a rock riff with equal ease. Price's band, Lake Street Dive, just about keeps up with her range. For example, in a wonderful live session of "Shame, Shame, Shame" the group recorded for Paste in April, double bassist Bridget Kearney sets up a supple line that would do Ron Carter proud, while guitarist Mike Olson adds psychedelic fuzz fire and a new member, keyboardist Akie Bermiss, supplies some deep soul and gospel sensibilities in his backing vocals. That track is off this year's *Free Yourself Up* (Nonesuch), which, like all of the band's albums, is a joyful exploration of the common ground between torch singers and the Beatles. "Dude" is a standout; drummer Mike Calabrese and Kearney lock into a tight, itchy rock groove while Price questions, "Would you like me more / If I were a dude?" before launching into a full-on ear-piercing wail a la Robert Plant. Though Lake Street Dive is talented at songwriting, they're also known to perform some amazing covers—their laid-back, slowed-down version of the Jackson Five's "I Want You Back" is both completely different from and—amazingly—every bit as good as the original. Whatever they decide to perform live tonight, it'll be worth hearing. —NOAH BERLATSKY

NINE INCH NAILS See Thursday. *The Jesus and Mary Chain* open. 7 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 1106 W. Lawrence, sold out. 17+

MOLLY NILSSON *Desert Liminal* and *Emily Jane Powers* open. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$12. 21+.

In the autobiographical writings of historian Edward Gibbon published in 1786, the author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* wrote, "The present is a fleeting moment, the past is no more; and our prospect of futurity is dark and doubtful." Enigmatic DIY synth-pop star Molly Nilsson shies away from such declarative statements in her interviews, but more than two centuries after Gibbon articulated those sentiments, they could certainly be applied to her tunes. Nilsson creates shimmering goth anthems that feel simultaneously anchored to 80s pop tropes yet not in step with any trend, and express a frightening awareness of how close life is to the end. Since the Swedish artist last graced the stage at the Empty Bottle six years ago she's released four albums, each one more focused



Božo Vrećo @ SEAD SASIVAREVIC

on critiquing social structures and institutions than its predecessor. On "1995," from 2015's *Zenith*, she took aim at the corporate colonization of emotional landscapes while waxing wistful on the connection she felt with the world in the mid-90s. On her new record, *Twenty Twenty*, she continues to explore that delicate balance of the personal and the political. Early single "A Slice of Lemon" features a music video that contrasts glacial landscapes with ice getting smaller as it floats in a drink while Nilsson sings about her "melting eyes" collapsing into "watery" tears—heartbreak mixed with environmental ruin makes a hell of a cocktail. Nilsson has rarely played the midwest, and tonight is a perfect opportunity to see a performer who articulates both the fear and possibility of our current moment, and gives us a chance to dance while the world burns. —ED BLAIR

BOŽO VREĆO 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, 4544 N. Lincoln, \$45, \$43 members. 18

Bosnian singer, dancer, and style icon Božo Vrećo has struck gold in his homeland and beyond by bringing a youthful, genderfluid, and subversive sensibility to *sevdah* (also known as *sevdalinka*), a Balkan folk form with Sephardic, Turkish, and Arabic influences. This beautiful melancholy singing experienced a resurgence following the Bosnian war, and it's often been mixed with jazz, pop, and various international streams. Based in Sarajevo, Vrećo taught archeology before his band, Halka, caught fire in 2015, and he's also released two solo albums, *Moj Sevdah* (2014) and *Pandora* (2017). Vrećo's piercing, pure tenor spans the range of *sevdah* singers of any gender, and he lives his life in similar defiance of tradition: he has sometimes identified as gay in interviews, and currently identifies as both male and female (though he uses male pronouns). Bearded, tattooed, and decked out in sweeping long gowns during his performances, Vrećo cuts a dashing figure as his voice undulates and ululates through the aching twists and turns of classic *sevdah* songs and his own compositions.

The effect highlights the power of a reclaimed past projected through the technique and showmanship of a very modern artist. —MONICA KENDRICK

YAEJI See also Sunday. Beta Librae opens. 11:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 1807 S. Allport, sold out. 17+

I'm a little mesmerized by Yaeji. The New York-based producer and visual artist mixes geometric, house-influenced beats with quiet, reverb-drenched pop hooks, and switches off between singing verses in English and Korean, and the results verge on hypnotic. I was immediately hooked last winter, when a friend played me "Raingurl" off her November 2017 release, *EP2* (Godmode). With a chorus beginning "Mother Russia in my cup / and my glasses fogging up," the lyrics call to mind a sweaty, red Solo-cup-filled college party in someone's basement, but its relatively bare arrangements make the music feel more like a pregame before a big night out: fun and energetic, but with room to relax. Yaeji's newest release, "One More," is less overtly dancey than "Raingurl" but has a similarly casual, friendlike intimacy. With pillowy textures punctuated by drum-machine beats, "One More" achieves dreamy ambience while avoiding the soupiness of shoegaze. Though Yaeji sings softly, the characteristically minimalist composition highlights her lyricism rather than burying it in the

mix. "One More" is the first track Yaeji has released since *EP2*, so hopefully this means there's more on the way. —ANNA WHITE

SUNDAY 28

BROCKHAMPTON 7:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 1106 W. Lawrence, sold out. 18

Just months after Los Angeles-based boy band Brockhampton headlined at Chicago's House of Blues this February, founding member Ameer Vann was accused on social media of sexual misconduct by several women who detailed encounters with him that they allege were abusive and manipulative. In May, Vann was kicked out, and the remaining members canceled tour dates so they could take time to regroup. Finally, this September they made their return with their fourth studio album, *Iridescence*. On the new album, Brockhampton prove that Vann's absence hasn't impacted their uniquely sculpted rap-pop sound; across its tracks they successfully maintain—and even amplify—the signature balance of vibrance and moodiness that's helped catapult them to fame. Raw, erratic, and experimental, *Iridescence* won't immediately appeal to all who listen. Though its mix of up-tempo techno and garage beats with the members variously yelling, rapping,



humming, and singing is nothing new for Brockhampton, it can come across as overwhelming and uninviting at first spin. But play it a just couple more times and Brockhampton just might hit a sweet spot you didn't even know you had. The relentless energy of "New Orleans" is similar to "Boogie," their hit track off of last year's *Saturation III*, while the mellow, cooled, asentimental chords of "San Marcos" serve as a reminder of the group's versatility. And taken as a whole, *Iridescence* reaffirms Brockhampton's ability to completely captivate their fans. —MARYKATE O'MEARA

YAEJI See Saturday. Beta Librae and Kuh Lida open. 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 1807 S. Allport, \$25, \$20 in advance. 17+

MONDAY 29

JUPITER STYLES Club Night, Josh Agran, and Bobby Burg open. 8 PM, Subterranean, 2011 W. North, \$8. 17+

Sean Neumann got hooked on this city's south-suburban punk scene in the late 2000s, just in time for an early view of some of the musical voices that would influence Chicago's DIY community in the coming decade, including outsider-pop auteurs Nnamdi Ogbonnaya and Julia Steiner, who fronts the inimitable country-emo group Ratboys. As those musicians trickled into Chicago, Neumann followed suit after spending four years at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in the mid-2010s, which included a year working as an intern for the great midwestern indie label Polyvinyl. These days he's entrenched in the local scene, playing bass in Ratboys (who recently wrapped up a U.S. tour supporting emo heartthrobs Foxing) and working on his power-pop solo project, Jupiter Styles (and, not to go unmentioned, he's also freelanced for the Reader on occasion). As Neumann recent- ➔

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12.7	SYLEENA JOHNSON 7 PM & 10 PM SHOWS
1.6	SONS OF THE NEVER WRONG WITH MICHAEL SMITH
1.8	SHANE KOYCZAN
1.12	MAYSA - 7 PM & 10 PM SHOWS
1.16	EAGLEMANIA

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11.5	KATHARINE MCPHEE
11.8	KELLER WILLIAMS DUO
11.13	ELIANE ELIAS - A BRAZILIAN JOURNEY

10.28-30 MATISYAHU	10.31 DAVID COOK
11.4 VUSI MAHLASELA TOWNSHIP TOUR	11.6 PETER ASHER & JEREMY CLYDE

UPCOMING SHOWS

10.26	KEVIN GRIFFIN (OF BETTER THAN EZRA)
11.1	PAUL THORN WITH TRAPPER SCHOEPP
11.3	LOOSE ENDS FEAT. JANE EUGENE
11.9	DAVID PHIPPS OF STS9
11.10-11	JOHN HIATT
11.12	CONYA DOSS
11.14	PETER WOLF & THE MIDNIGHT TRAVELERS
11.15	JOE HENRY WITH CLARENCE BUCARO
11.18	JON MCLAUGHLIN & MATT WERTZ 4 & 8 PM SHOWS
11.19	THE EXPENDABLES
11.20-21	J MASCIS (OF DINOSAUR JR.)
11.23	30DB FEAT. JEFF AUSTIN & BRENDAN BAYLISS (OF UMPHREY'S MCGEE)
11.24-25	BODEANS
11.26	ANTHONY DAVID THE SONGS OF BILL WITHERS
11.27	POKEY LAFARGE
11.28	CANNED HEAT
11.29	DWELE
11.30	JANE LYNCH "A SWINGIN' LITTLE CHRISTMAS"
12.1	ANDREW RIPP & FRIENDS
12.2	JENNIFER KNAPP & MARGARET BECKER - "HYMNS OF CHRISTMAS"
12.2	SUZU BOGGOSS

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NOVEMBER 1 SMILIN' BOBBY AND THE CLEMTONES
NOVEMBER 2 ICEBOX
NOVEMBER 3 FIRST WARD PROBLEMS
NOVEMBER 4 THE HATE & THE HARVEST
MIKE FELTEN 8:30 PM
ANDREW D HUBER
PROSPECT FOUR 9PM
JUST DUET
SPRING BO
WAGNER & MORSE
NOVEMBER 8 FLABBY HOFFMAN SHOW 8PM
NOVEMBER 9 STRAY BOLTS
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SAT 3 R&B/SOUL DIVA **NIKKI HILL**
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In the SideBar - Nobody's Girl

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11/9 - Expo '76
11/10 - Edward David Anderson / Chicago Farmer
11/16 - Vanessa Davis Band
11/17 - Lucinda Williams (SOLD OUT)
11/21 - Black Wednesday w/ Terrapin Flyer
11/23 - Speed4Sarah Benefit
11/24 - The Zimmermen do Dylan w/Cathy Richardson
11/30 - American English
12/1 - Chris & Heather's Country Calendar Show
12/5 - Jon Dee Graham / Ben de la Coeur
12/8 - Mike Cooley

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11.05 **KORPIKLAANI & ARKONA**
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11.07 **BEACH FOSSILS / WAVVES**
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11.08 **ANTARCTIGO VESPUCCI**
KATIE ELLEN / TELETHON

11.09 **LIKE MOTHS TO FLAMES**
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11.10 **THE GET UP KIDS**
REMEMBER SPOTS

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11.17 **RUBBLEBUCKET**

11.18 **DANNY WORSNOP**
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11.21 **PALE WAVES**
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11.24 **BAYSIDE**
KAYLEIGH GOLDSWORTHY

11.25 **SABRINA BENAIM**
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11.30 **KEYS N KRATES**

12.01 **HAKEN / LEPROUS**
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MUSIC

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Brockhampton
ASHLAN GREY

continued from 33

ly told Tim Crisp on the Better Yet podcast, inspiration for his own songs strikes when he's on the road with Ratboys, and he often needs to get creative in order to mark down his ideas in transit. "I'll run off to the side and sing into my phone, like, act as if I'm talking on the phone," he said. "A lot of the stuff is very rooted in vocal melodies. I've very, very, very rarely have written anything where it starts with a guitar part." As a result of the swift and covert way his songs often start, the amiable, rambunctious tunes on Jupiter Styles's recent *Be Good* (Other World) burst forth with irrepressible melodies that are infectious enough to leave listeners feeling like they knew these songs before ever hearing them.

—LEOR GALIL

TUESDAY30

GOON SAX *The Hecks and the Curls* open.
8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$12, \$10
in advance. 21+

I'm starting to wonder whether Australia has ever produced a bad band. One of the latest crews of Aussies to catch the attention and affection of American indie-rock lovers are the Goon Sax, a trio of teens from Brisbane cofronted by multi-

instrumentalist Louis Foster, the son of Go-Betweens founder Robert Foster (which proves that the ability to make perfect jangle-pop can and does run in families). On the brand-new *We're Not Talking* (Chapter Music), the Goon Sax play slack-er rock with breezy rhythms and the speak-sing storyteller vocal style favored by their Australian peers. The band hashed out that combination on their 2016 debut, *Up to Anything*, but on *We're Not Talking* they take a huge step forward, filling out their sound with horns and keys and adding layers of sophistication to their melodies and arrangements. Drummer and singer Riley Jones seems to have found her voice over the past couple of years; she contributes lead vocals to "Strange Light" and album closer "Til the End" as well as the magical harmonies all over the album. Their presence adds a warm, moving human element to the the band's otherwise disinterested energy.

—LUCA CIMARUSTI

WEDNESDAY31

LADIES OF LCD SOUNDSYSTEM 8:30 PM,
Sleeping Village, 3734 W. Belmont, \$26, \$21 in
advance. 21+

This fall, two members of LCD Soundsystem, keyboardist Nancy Whang and synths and electron-



**Ladies of LCD
Soundsystem**
MICHAEL VADINO

SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC

PIVOTAL CHICAGO MUSICIANS THAT SOMEHOW HAVE NOT
GOTTEN THEIR JUST DUES *by* PLASTIC CRIMEWAVE



BLUEGRASS & COUNTRY MUSIC ARE FULL OF FEMALE STARS, BUT HOW MANY ALL-WOMAN BANDS IN THOSE GENRES CAN YOU NAME? IF YOU HAVEN'T HEARD OF THE WILDWOOD PICKERS, ADD THEM TO YOUR LIST. TO HELP TELL THEIR STORY, I INTERVIEWED GUITAR VIRTUOSO MURIEL ANDERSON, THE GROUP'S COFOUNDER, WHO WAS BORN IN 1960 & RAISED IN DOWNERS GROVE. A PRECOCIOUS MUSICIAN, SHE WOWNED THE STAFF AT THE OLD TOWN SCHOOL OF FOLK MUSIC & WAS PLACED IN ADVANCED CLASSES AS A PRETEEN. IN 1976 SHE STARTED WILDWOOD PICKERS WITH BANJO PLAYER KIM KOSKELA, WHOSE SISTER ROBIN JOINED ON VOCALS—SHE ALSO HAD A CAR AND A DRIVER'S LICENSE TO GET THEM TO GIGS. THE GROUP, WHICH SOON INCLUDED FIDDLER KATHY JONES, TOOK THEIR NAME FROM THEIR CARTER FAMILY SONG "WILDWOOD FLOWER," AND ON THE COVER OF THE DEBUT ALBUM, 1980'S "FIRST HARVEST" (ON THEIR OWN CLOGGING CHICKEN LABEL), THEY WORE CHECKERED BLUE-AND-WHITE SHIRTS LIKE THEIR INSPIRATIONS. THE LINEUP ON THAT LP INCLUDED KOSKELA, MATRIARCH CORY ON BASS AND MALE FIDDLER TOM RE, BUT

SOON THE PICKERS BECAME ALL-FEMALE (WITH ANOTHER KOSKELA DAUGHTER SUE ON MANDOLIN). ON "FIRST HARVEST," THEY COVERED THE LINES OF UK FOLK ARTIST JOHN RENN BURN AND BLUEGRASS LEGEND BILL MONROE—WHOSE BEAN BLOSSOM FESTIVAL IN INDIANA THE PICKERS PLAYED SEVERAL TIMES. THEY TOURED OVERSEAS FOR THE USO, GIGGED REGULARLY FOR 5 YEARS AT DOLLY PARTON'S DOLLYWOOD, AND CLAIMED TO BE THE FIRST ALL-WOMAN BAND TO PLAY THE GRAND OLE OPRY. THEY ALSO RELEASED 3 MORE ALBUMS: 1983'S "FAMILY REUNION," 1987'S "BLUEGRASS IN MY HEART," AND 1992'S "GOODNIGHT SOLDIER." THEY WENT THROUGH SEVERAL FIDDLERS, AND AFTER ANDERSON QUIT 6 YEARS IN—SHE'D GO ON TO LEARN FROM CHET ATKINS AND BUILD A THRIVING SOLO CAREER—MANY GUITARISTS CAME AND WENT. SHORTLY BEFORE "GOODNIGHT SOLDIER," THE PICKERS STARTED GOING AS "THE WILDWOOD GIRLS," AT WHICH POINT THEIR BOOKINGS DOUBLED. BY THE TIME KIM KOSKELA RETIRED THE BAND NAME IN 1999, THOUGH, SHE WAS THE ONLY ORIGINAL MEMBER LEFT. —BIG THANKS TO MURIELA!

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ics player Gavin Rayna Russom, are on the road as the DJ duo Ladies of LCD Soundsystem. Russom came out as a transgender woman in June; her first performance after that was at Berlin as part of Femme's Room, on the eve of Pitchfork Music Fest, which LCD Soundsystem headlined that year. Each stop along the way will feature opening sets from local women and nonbinary artists, and a dollar from every ticket sold will be donated to RAINN and its 24/7 sexual assault survivor hotline. For Halloween, Whang and Russom are hitting up Chicago's young venue Sleeping Village, and though the dance music they're known for is more invigorating than spooky, it's so enjoyable that even the most hard-core trick-or-treater would happily go off the holiday theme. Their set will pull from their immense work with LCD Soundsystem, their solo careers, and their collaborations together. LCD Soundsystem,

which broke up in 2011, have effortlessly picked up where they left off since reuniting in 2015. They've been back on the touring circuit, and they released their comeback album, *American Dream*, last year. This fall the group recorded a couple of live tracks at Electric Lady Studios as part of Spotify's singles series, both of which merge the clarity and slick production of their studio material with the energy of their recent concerts: "Tonight" (from 2010's *American Dream*) and a mashup of bittersweet album closer "Home" (from *This Is Happening*) with a cover of Chic's "I Want Your Love." There's no doubt that this music is meant to be experienced live, and Whang and Rayna will undoubtedly get audiences dancing with sounds that draw from their time in LCD Soundsystem and their individual musical histories, while pushing forward into something new. —IZZY YELLEN

3/2 Lures

MUSIC PAIRED WITH BEER

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EMPORIUM WICKER PARK 10/27

COSMIC COUNTRY
THE HIDEOUT 10/27

SHANNON AND THE CLAMS
THALIA HALL 10/31

TRISTEN
GMAN TAVERN 11/2

NNAMDI OGBONNAYA / SEN MORIMOTO
EMPTY BOTTLE 11/9

CAIRO GANG
THE HIDEOUT 11/14

RUSSIAN CIRCLES / BONGRIPPER
METRO 11/23

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SAVAGE LOVE

By Dan Savage

Here kitty, kitty . . .

Advice for the kitten-play novice. Plus: When your dealer pulls a Louis C.K.

Q: Hi, Dan: I am a homosexual young adult seeking advice about kitten play. It's a turn-on when someone calls me kitten, but I'm not sure how to express my kink or desire for kink play to the person or persons I am into. Any advice would be appreciated.

—CONSTRUCTIVE ADVICE
THOUGHTFULLY SOUGHT

A: Hi, CATS: I'm a homosexual not-so-young adult without much advice to offer where kitten play is concerned. But Amp Somers, who hosts the kink-friendly sex-ed YouTube show *Watts the Safeword*, assures me that gay kitties are definitely a thing.

"Kitten play is a subcategory of the 'animal role-play' or 'pet play' kink," said Somers. "It is a form of domination and submission in which someone gets into the head space of an animal they are role-playing and takes on its characteristics—be it with gear (masks, tails, collars) or by acting out the mannerisms of their animal. Most importantly—and this goes for all proper pet players—there are no actual animals involved in this play."

Puppy play is the most common form of pet play—by far—and it's very popular among younger gay kinksters.

Somers explains why: "This sort of play allows someone to get into kink easily with or without a partner and in a playful manner," said Somers. "Pet play allows players to get their feet wet in the BDSM world without having to visit a dark dungeon, get tied up, or engage in anything a newer kinkster might find intimidating. It's a great entry-level kink."

As for expressing your kink, CATS, that's something you're going to have to work

out on your own.

"I imagine CATS already has an image of what kitten play looks like to them, and I bet it differs from what I might imagine my own pet play would look like," said Somers. "Is CATS a domesticated lazy kitten who lies in the sun? A curious, well-trained, docile cat responsive to cuddles and treats? Or are they a rambunctious, bratty, independent stray?"

To find your way into the kink scene, Somers recommends getting online.

"Sites like kitten-play.com offer in-depth written pieces by players, links to resources, and forums where people like CATS can educate themselves. Other sites like FetLife or Facebook provide more private groups to 'meet' others, ask more in-depth questions, find local get-togethers, and make friends to socialize with. Once CATS feels comfortable in their own identity and has defined what they want out of this play, they will be able to really communicate to their partner(s) what they're into and what they want out of kitten play."

Q: I'm a gay male, and one of my good friends has put me in a strange position. The friend has been married to his husband for 15 years, and they are allowed to "play." I occasionally go over to this friend's house right after work to buy weed, and he's always alone when I come by. He joked about answering the door naked and then did it. (He told me he was going to, but I honestly didn't think he would do it.) I was extremely uncomfortable, and he knew it. The last time I went over, he was naked again—and this time, he jerked off to completion in front of me. He asked me to join in, and I told him I

couldn't because I hadn't discussed anything like this with my boyfriend.

I'm supposed to go over again tomorrow, and he asked me to come by early because his husband would be getting home from work early that day. This leads me to believe that the husband would not be OK with this. I haven't said anything to his husband or my boyfriend because I don't want this to become a huge mess and I hoped my palpable discomfort would put an end to it. Any thoughts on how I should handle this nicely to make it stop without hurting his feelings? —UNDRESSED
NAKED FRIEND REALLY IS ENGINEERING NEEDLESS DRAMA

A: Your "good friend" is an asshole, UNFRIEND. He's violating a whole bunch of social norms—chiefly the don't-jerk-off-to-completion-in-front-of-other-people-without-their-enthusiastic-consent norm (aka the Louis C.K. Career in Comedy Memorial Norm)—and relying on your adherence to other social norms (avoid being rude, defuse don't confront, spare others' feelings) to get away with violating you as well. This asshole is sexually harassing you, and you haven't told him to stop in unambiguous language.

I'm sorry, UNFRIEND, but you're going to have to be blunt: "You have to knock this shit off. It's disrespectful, it's nonconsensual, and it's pissing me off." Don't worry about hurting his feelings—he obviously doesn't care about your feelings—and find a new weed dealer. ☒

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NEW

Ashlee & Evan 1/12, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall **A**
Audition 12/20, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Aurora, Talos 3/1, 7:30 PM, Metro, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM **A**
Bad Bad Hats 1/16, 9 PM, Schubas, part of Tomorrow Never Knows, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Brendan Bayliss & Jake Cinninger 12/7, 8 PM, Park West, on sale Thu 10/25, 10 AM, 18+
Beirut, Helado Negro 2/22, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Bully 12/31, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Mariah Carey 3/11, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM
S. Carey 1/20, 7 PM, Schubas, part of Tomorrow Never Knows, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Cave 1/17, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, part of Tomorrow Never Knows, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Charly Bliss 1/16, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, part of Tomorrow Never Knows, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Cipher with Nick Photinos 12/1, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Dan & Shay, Chris Lane 3/30, 7:30 PM, Rosemont Theater, Rosemont, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM
The Devil Makes Three 2/2, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Disturbed, Three Days Grace 3/8, 7:30 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM
Felix da Housecat 11/21, 9 PM, Virgin Hotel

Fisher 11/18, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Laura Gibson 1/16, 9 PM, Hideout
Frode Gjerstad 4tet 12/13, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Dave Hollister 12/3, 7 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 10/25, noon **A**
Hood Internet 12/31, 9 PM, Subterranean
I'm With Her, Mipso 3/2, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 17+
Ivy Lab 12/14, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Syleena Johnson 12/7, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 10/25, noon **A**
King Tuff, Stonefield 1/26, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Mike Krol 2/28, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Sonny Landreth, Marcia Ball 3/1, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, and 3/2, 8 PM, Fitzgerald's, Berwyn, on sale Fri 10/26
Albert Lee 2/7, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM **A**
Legions of Metal Fest with Cirith Ungol, Salvacion, and more 5/17-18, Reggie's Rock Club and Reggie's Music Joint
Lotus 12/30-31, 9 PM, Park West, 18+
LP 2/8, 7:30 PM, the Vic, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Jeff Lynne's ELO 6/27, 8 PM, United Center, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM
Ella Mai 3/3, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Stephen Malkmus & the Jicks 1/23, 8 PM, Metro, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Mannequin Men, Acquaintances 12/15, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Maysa 1/12, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 10/25, noon **A**

Mndsgn 1/19, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, part of Tomorrow Never Knows, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Mo, Abra 1/25, 7:30 PM, the Vic, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Chante Moore 12/8, 6 and 8:30 PM, the Promontory, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM **A**
The 1975 5/8, 7 PM, United Center, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM
Noname 12/29-31, 6 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM
The Number Twelve Looks Like You 12/9, 9 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Old Wounds 11/7, 8 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+
Petal, Bernice 1/18, 9 PM, Schubas, part of Tomorrow Never Knows, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Rainbow Kitten Surprise 2/9, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM **A**
Chris Robinson Brotherhood 1/25, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 17+
Secret Sisters 2/8, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM **A**
Shad 2/13, 7 PM, Schubas, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM **A**
Shinigami, Familypet, 93feet-0fsmoke 12/6, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+
Sarah Shook & the Disarmers 1/18, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, part of Tomorrow Never Knows, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Sons of the Silent Age 1/12, 8 PM, Metro, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 18+
Sports 1/20, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, part of Tomorrow Never Knows, on sale Fri 10/25, 10 AM, 18+
Still Woozy, Victor! 1/17, 8 PM, Schubas, part of Tomorrow Never Knows, on sale Fri 10/25, 10 AM, 18+

Swamp Dogg 11/16, 9 PM, the Promontory **A**
Switchfoot, Colony House 3/8-9, 6:30 PM, Park West, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM **A**
Ray Volpe 12/20, 8 PM, Chop Shop, 18+
Waco Brothers 2/1, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM **A**
Colter Wall 2/23, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 10/26, 10 AM, 17+

UPDATED

Giraffage, Ryan Hemsworth 11/1, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge, canceled
Hip Hop House Party with Naughty by Nature, 2 Live Crew, Kool Moe Dee, Kid N Play, and more 11/2, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre, canceled
Matthew & the Atlas 11/17, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston, canceled

UPCOMING

Acid Dad 11/2, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Amigo the Devil 11/2, 9 PM, Beat Kitchen
Antarcitgo Vespucci, Katie Ellen 11/8, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge **A**
Omar Apollo 12/7, 8 PM, Metro **A**
Bass Drum of Death 11/1, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+
James Bay 3/19, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 17+
Behemoth, At the Gates, Wolves in the Throne Room 11/9, 7:30 PM, House of Blues, 17+
Brave Combo 12/15, 9 PM, Fitzgerald's, Berwyn
Captured Tracks X with Lina Tullgren, Wax Chattels, and Drahl 11/5, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle **A**
Cat Power, Willis Earl Beal 12/20, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Cloud Nothings, Courtney 12/14, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Dawes 1/29, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Death From Above, Les Butcherettes 11/16, 8:30 PM, Metro **A**
Devil Wears Prada, Roots Above 11/23, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge **A**
Devildriver 11/11, 6:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Drab Majesty 11/29, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Exploded View 11/1, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Father 11/2, 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 18+
Felly, Gypsys 12/1, 6:30 PM, Patio Theater
Goatwhore, Casualties, Black Tusk 11/21, 6 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+



Grapetooth 11/11, 7 PM, Thalia Hall **A**
Hands Like Houses 11/16, 6 PM, Bottom Lounge **A**
Interpol 2/7, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre
Joe Jackson 2/21-22, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Khruangbin 11/28, 7:30 PM, the Vic **A**
Leftover Crack, Negative Approach 11/28, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Lemon Twigs 1/25, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Low 11/16, 7:30 PM, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel **A**
Macabre 12/22, 6:30 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Mannheim Steamroller 12/15, 8 PM, Rosemont Theater, Rosemont
Mewithoutyou 11/30, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Graham Nash 3/17, 7 PM, Aethnaeum Theatre **A**
Pale Waves, Candelights 11/21, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge **A**
Post Animal 12/15, 8 PM, Metro **A**
Preoccupations, Protomartyr 12/6, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Procul Harum 2/20-21, 8 PM, City Winery **A**
Rising Appalachia 11/14, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **A**
Russian Circles, Bongripper 11/23, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
The Sea & Cake 11/17, 7 PM, Empty Bottle
Ty Segall, William Tyler 11/2, 7:30 PM, Thalia Hall **A**
Snail Mail 1/17, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Soft Moon 1/24, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Teenage Fanclub 3/6, 7:30 PM, Metro, 18+
This Will Destroy You 11/2, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
KT Tunstall 11/1, 8 PM, Park West, 18+
Veil of Maya 12/21, 6:30 PM, Bottom Lounge **A**
Ryley Walker 12/28, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
William Elliott Whitmore 12/13, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Wild Nothing 11/9, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Windhand, Satan's Satyrs, Genocide Pact 11/7, 9 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Wrecks 11/20, 7 PM, Lincoln Hall **A**
Xibalba Itzaes, Unholy Lust 12/7, 8 PM, Cobra Lounge
Young Fathers 11/19, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 18+
Yowler 11/18, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle **A**



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

LAST WEEK Chicago hip-hop duo the **Cool Kids** dropped “**Black Mags Pt. II**”—a sequel to their 2008 single “Black Mags”—to mark the tenth birthday of their debut EP, **The Bake Sale**. The anniversary celebration continues Friday, October 26, at the annual **Halloween Basement Party** hosted by Evanston brewery and tap room **Temperance**. The Cool Kids headline, and everyone who orders an advance ticket through Eventbrite can buy a new commemorative vinyl version of *The Bake Sale*. The festivities kick off at 5:30 PM.

Since Halloween costumes for wolves are so hard to find, Gossip Wolf usually settles for eating too much discount candy corn and going to tribute shows where ace local musicians play as their favorite bands. Among this year's selections for riff-or-treaters, the most improbable gig is the one going down on Friday, October 26, at the **Hideout**. A single lineup of scene staples—**Angie Mead** (Redgrave), **Jeanine O'Toole** (Golden Horse Ranch Band), **Jim Becker** (Mind Over Mirrors), **Stephen Howard** (Pinebender), **Josh Johannpeter** (Hujo), **Kent Lambert** (Roommate), and actor-songwriter **Reid Coker**—will perform music by **Abba** and **Black Sabbath**. Holy sweet leaf, is this ever a show to take a chance on!

On Saturday, October 27, visiting the Cultural Center's **Claudia Cassidy Theater** might feel like watching a Chicago-centric episode of *American Idol*. That afternoon, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events hosts the **ChicagoMade 2018 Music A&R Auditions**, where 17 artists will vie for spots on the bill at next year's Taste of Chicago and meetings with industry bigwigs such as Chicago producer and BET host Kosine and the A&R director of Nashville's Big Machine Label Group. Among the contestants are punk-prog brothers **Avantist**, hip-hop duo **Mother Nature**, and local singer-songwriter **Rachel Sarah Thomas**. Gossip Wolf wishes all 17 the best of luck! —J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

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